The Silent Highway

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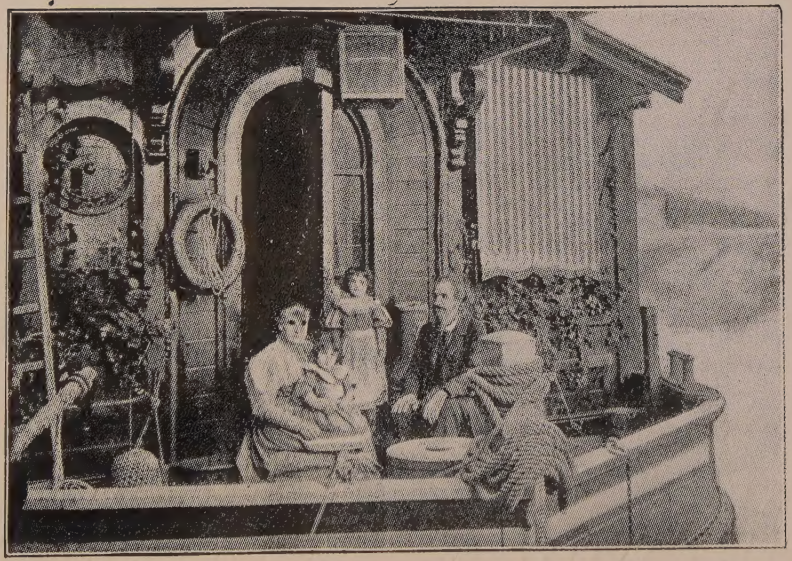

THE BON BERGER AND HER CREW—SEE PAGE 21

The Silent Highway

A Story of the McAll Mission

By

LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON

1838-1920

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FOREWORD

THE amazing readiness of the French people to receive a simpler and purer gospel than in general they have been taught is in an important degree the result of a century of history, but it was crystallized into self-consciousness by the Prussian war. The Protestant churches of the country were not slow to recoguize the opportunity thus created, but the conditions then environing them restricted their efforts, and it was with joy that the pastors of Paris welcomed the English minister Robert W. McAll when immediately after the Commune he found himself called of God to establish a mission to the working people of France.

The venerable Academician Rosseeuw St. Hilaire said of this man and his work, "Robert McAll was a providential man, sent in a providential time with a providential message," and in thirty years of activity the McAll Mission in France has proved this to be true. Its interesting growth and important achievements are known to many. A work as simply one of faith as the orphan houses of George Müller, without resources except as the Christian people of Great Britain, America and other countries have co-operated with the struggling French churches in its support, this mission, opened January 17, 1879, in a small shop in a

Parisian *faubourg*, has spread all over France. Among other methods it carries on an interesting boat work, a floating chapel upon the canalized water ways of France carrying the gospel to villages and hamlets which otherwise could hardly be reached.

This boat work of the McAll Mission furnishes the motive of the present story. The author was so happy as to become associated with Dr. McAll and his work in the second year of the mission, and her acquaintance with it has since been uninterrupted. Her effort in this little book is to give an accurate presentation of the relations of this mission to the French people. The thread of the narrative is fictitious, but the characters are studied from life, and every incident of conversion is in all its details a fact of history. Some of the characters here presented have appeared in former stories, Fifine and The Cruise of the Mystery, but the present work is entirely independent of these. It is written, as those were, in the hope of broadening and deepening the interest already felt in this country in this important mission, an interest which eighteen years ago took form in the American McAll Association, whose headquarters are at 1716 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.

L. S. H.

New York, Oct. 3, 1901.

THE SILENT HIGHWAY

CHAPTER I

A CLUSTER of huts nestled by the canal-side under a low hill. Most of them had seen long service as wagon-houses of ambulant showmen until worn out beyond all possibility of repair. Yet in them still lived men, women and children, and on very cold nights donkeys as well, for they were the bread winners and must not suffer beyond donkey-endurance. Besides, they were warm, and the children, cuddling up to them, were in less danger of freezing.

Winter, however, was months ago, and George Poêle, earnestly engaged in the effort to lift Pierre Ducros's hat from his head by means of his fishing-tackle, had quite forgotten the chilblains and other inconveniences of the cold season. As for hunger and hard words and blows, they were of all seasons and must be taken as they came. Pierre, for example, was sure to kick and cuff him when he felt his hat lifted from his head and beheld it dangling at the end of George's fish line; but the exquisite pleasure of a bit of mischief, and the only secondary delight of beholding Pierre's rage and hearing the laughter of the other men and of all the boys, would be cheaply bought at such a price. His father, engaged just now in vaunting the superior qualities of his Georgette over those of Pierre's Nantine,

would join in the guffaws and observe with philosophical coolness the punishment which Pierre might administer. And luckily Pierre's sabots were worn out, and the soft *mules* in which his feet were encased robbed at least half the punishment of its terrors. Besides, who could look so far ahead when all one's powers were concentrated in swinging the fishhook into that hole in the soft crown of Pierre's hat?

The other boys, sitting with George on a pile of old boards before the huts, had just burst into a shout of congratulatory applause, and Pierre, irate, had turned to see what had become of his hat, when a loud shout turned all attention to the canal. In the river beyond the lock a long float of boats and barges was being brought by a brisk little tug to the lock gates, and the next moment men, boys and donkeys were racing down the bank and along the tow path.

The women disappeared within the huts. There was much bustle and clinking of "kitchen battery," but long before the train of boats had filtered one by one through the lock, they had emerged from their cabins laden with pots, pans and bundles of clothing, their backs and shoulders piled high with hay and fodder. One or two of them had little children on their arms. Thérèse Poêle was leading a little girl by the hand, and by the hesitating manner of the child's walk and the vacant stare of her eyes it was evident that the little thing had but lately become blind.

THE TRACKER VILLAGE—SEE PAGE 6

At the lock side all was bustle and animation. Slow as was the progress of each boat of the train it was all too rapid for the talk, the gesticulations, the exclamations, which seemed to be necessary before each boat could be fitted with a tracker. The arrangement completed, the fortunate tracker hastened up the bank, meeting his wife and household goods half way, and passing on to the now deserted village, took upon his back his empty cabin. This he carried to the canal side, installed it in the centre of the boat, harnessed his donkey to the towing gear, or if he was too poor to possess one, laid the tow rope over his own shoulder, and slowly dragged the heavy craft clear of the lock; his wife meanwhile, as much at home upon the boat as she had been an hour before upon the bank, busying herself with setting her cabin in order, and his children, perhaps, running along the tow-path at his side. This process had been several times repeated and still Thérèse Poêle sat beside the tow path holding her little Ernestine by the hand. For Jean, her husband, being more prosperous than most of his fellow trackers, had a *berrichon* of his own, and he and George were actively engaged in helping to transfer to it the cargo of a river coal boat, too broad to pass through the locks of the canalized river Loing.

The transfer was still incomplete, and most of the vessels of the float had passed through the lock and started on their farther journey, when George, looking up from his work, uttered an exclamation

of surprise. A beautiful little craft, such as he had never seen before, was just entering the lock. It was not a freight boat, but rather like a floating house, with rows of pointed windows along the sides, and at stem and stern a balcony gay with vines and flowering plants. On the prow the name was painted—George spelled it out with some difficulty, *Le Bon Berger*—and above the flat roof was stretched a sort of banner bearing the word *Conférences*. Seated on the forward balcony was a group of father, mother and two little girls, but as the prow of the boat entered the lock they all stepped ashore and the children, with shrieks of delight, ran up the bank to gather some yellow flowers that were blooming under the bushes.

"Just see, mother," cried George eagerly, running to where his mother sat beside the bank. "Is it not *coquet*, the little boat? Show it to Ernestine, won't you?" and as he ran back at his father's peremptory call the mother began a description of the strange boat to the sightless child who leaned against her knee.

The little girls of the boat drew near. They were sturdy little creatures of perhaps five and seven years, quite unabashed by strangers, yet with the good manners of children carefully trained.

"Why do you tell her how the boat looks?" asked the elder of the two, as Thérèse Poêle paused in her description and Ernestine uttered an exclamation of delight.

"Because, little girl," replied the mother, "my little Ernestine cannot see it. She is blind."

The elder child stood still in pained dismay, but the younger one peered closely into Ernestine's face and exclaimed, "But she has eyes, like me, and I can see!"

"Hush, Clarice," interposed the elder sister, gravely, but Thérèse Poêle was not displeased. She only smiled sorrowfully and said, "And so my little Ernestine could see, once; but she has been very ill, and somehow the illness took her sight away, and now she is quite blind."

"Blind!" echoed little Clarice sorrowfully; then suddenly a light broke across her face.

"Then you must just ask Jesus to make her see again. Like blind Bartimeus, don't you know? He just said, 'Lord, that I might receive my sight, and immediately'"—she hesitated a little over the long word—"'immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus in the way.' Don't you 'member? Why didn't you ask Jesus right away?" she added, a shadow of perplexity crossing her face.

"Anna! Clarice!" called the father's voice, "the boat is leaving the lock; come now!"

"Good-bye, little Ernestine," said Anna. "I'm sorry that you're blind."

"Don't forget to ask Jesus," little Clarice called back over her shoulder as Anna took her by the hand to run down the bank.

The blind child took up the word. "Ask Jesus, *maman?* Who is he? Will he make me see again?

Oh, mamma, where is he? Can't we go quick?" The color rose in her pale cheeks and she clutched her mother's hand eagerly.

"Jesus!" repeated the mother dreamily. "Yes, I remember there was a story like that. The sisters told it me when I was a little girl at school. But that was long ago, my pet. He has been dead these many, many years." And as the excited child threw herself into her mother's arms with a burst of disappointed tears the mother's tears flowed too, for the sore of her child's affliction was very grievous to her.

She sat long rocking her little daughter in her arms, her mind vaguely haunted by the saying "immediately he received his sight," even while with tender words she was trying to soothe her child to quietness. The sun was nearing the low western hills and the shadows were growing long when her husband's voice aroused her. Little Ernestine had fallen asleep upon her bosom, and the thoughts which at first had haunted her own mind had faded into vacancy. She rose heavily, gathered up the household goods which she had laid down, and still carrying the child climbed to the upper level of the lock. The berrichon, loaded at last, was ready for the journey, the donkey harnessed to the prow, George armed with a whip and his father smoking a pipe on the forward platform.

"She has a long start of us, that strange boat," George observed to his mother as she passed him to step aboard.

Thérèse looked southward; the strange boat was turning a bend of the river. The level rays of the sun glinted back from the polished wood work, and somehow it reminded her of the "glory" round the heads of the saints in the old church in the Morvan hills, where she had lived as a girl. Not for many years had Thérèse been in a church, and not once in all that time had she sighed at thought of one; but now she sighed heavily as she laid Ernestine in her little bunk and set about preparations for supper.

George followed the strange boat with his eyes until his father's voice aroused him: "Hey, let's bestir ourselves! Are you planted there?"

The boy cracked his long whip, Georgette kicked up her heels, and George nimbly sprang aside. His father burst into a roar of laughter; the little pantomine, repeated a hundred times in the course of a journey, always tickled him. Encouraged by applause George repeated the manœuvre, and thus the heavy craft got under way. Until the sun had set and the moon had followed it down the western sky the boy walked along the tow path, his interest divided between the antics of Georgette, the supper which his mother had handed to him over the side of the boat, and the distant lights of the strange boat that had so deeply stirred his curiosity.

As the moon went down his father came ashore, unharnessed Georgette and led her to the hut in the very centre of the berrichon, which was her safe abode. George shook out a bundle of hay and

dipped up a bucket of water. In a few moments all was quiet on the unlighted boat, the parents and Ernestine sleeping in their cabin and George beside the donkey in her hut.

In the course of an hour the boy awoke and looked out. The clouds were hanging low; not a star was in the sky, but far ahead along the silent highway of the river gleamed a row of lights from the windows of the *Bon Berger*.

CHAPTER II

"WAKE UP, boy! Here's a pretty farce! Bring out Georgette, quick! Hurry up! Are you dead or only asleep?"

George rubbed his eyes drowsily, then sprang up, all his wits about him, reached out in the dark to Georgette's bristly mane and dragged her up with him. A lurch of the boat bumping heavily against the bank threw him down again, all in a heap with the donkey, but in a second both had struggled to their feet and were outside of the hut. Both knew only too well the imminence of the danger.

It was pitchy black outside and the rain was pelting down in torrents. The wind was blowing fiercely; summer tempest though it was the boy could hardly stand against it with the heavy tossing of the flat bottomed boat. Then the sky was rent with lightning and a crash of thunder seemed to shake the very river. The next moment George, taking his bearings by the lightning flash, had snatched up an end of rope coiled at the hut door, and sprung ashore still clutching the donkey's neck. Then his mother's voice reached him:

"Take baby, Jean, quick!" and in another flash of light he saw his father catch Ernestine in his arms. George reached up, seized his mother's hand and the next moment she stood beside him, invisible in the black darkness.

"The lantern," shouted Jean, and by another lightning flash George saw his father, little Ernestine under one arm, holding desperately with hand and foot to the side of the *berrichon* and his mother kneeling with her back to the wind trying to light the lantern.

He took the damp matches from her hand and huddling close to her, the better to screen off the wild wind and rain, he succeeded in striking a light. Thérèse took it and flew to relieve her husband of the little girl. George was already harnessing Georgette to the prow of the boat, his father hard at work at the stern with ropes and poles to steady it and check its backward drifting.

The situation was indeed alarming. The *Jolie Charbonnière*, like all the craft by which the traffic of the shallower waterways of France is carried on, was very long, narrow and flat bottomed, with a heavy gunwale running along each side. Even a slight wind on the quarter, blowing across a river, is likely to upset these craft, and many are the accidents of this sort on the canalized rivers, sometimes with consequences more sad to the poor trackers than the loss of cargo. When the wind is straight ahead, though no risk of capsizing is incurred, the difficulty of hauling the boat is greatly increased, and if it blows hard at night, when the *berrichon* is simply laid unattached alongside the towing path (as the law requires) there is always a possibility that the boat will silently drift backward while the weary tracker family are asleep, and

morning will find them with half of yesterday's work to do over again.

When Jean Poêle was awakened in the dead of night by a heavy crash of the *Jolie Charbonnière* against the bank he found both these dangers confronting him. Foreseeing a thunder gust, he had pushed on late into the evening that he might moor his boat in one of the narrow canals by which a bend of the river is cut off, and so ensure its protection from a wind on the quarter by the high banks of the narrow waterway; but dark as it was when he rushed upon deck, he knew by the feel of the wind that the boat had drifted back into the open river, and into a broad reach where the full violence of the storm was upon it. The six hours toil of the previous evening was surely lost, and he had awakened none too soon to save the *Jolie Charbonnière* from capsizing with all her passengers on board. As it was, their lives were safe, but how about the boat and cargo?

The summer tempest blew itself out and the August morning dawned bright, cloudless, intensely hot. The *Jolie Charbonnière* was safe, and father and son, utterly exhausted, threw themselves upon the bank. Thérèse unhitched Georgette, rubbed her off with a wisp of hay and fed her; for the donkey's well-being was far more important than that of husband or son. George was indeed much too tired to think of food or toilet, and fell asleep almost as soon as he touched the ground.

Jean watched his wife for a few moments and

then gave utterance to a volley of curses. Thérèse made no reply, her husband's remarks in fact not being directed to her but to things in general. In the depth of her heart she quite agreed with him that the conduct of things in general was utterly reprehensible and not to be tolerated patiently, though at present she was too busy with more urgent matters to seek relief to her mind in words. By and bye, when Jean had said his say and she had given him his breakfast, she would take it out in being cross to him and snappish to George, and when they sought refuge in sleep or in flight, in appealing to the walls of her cabin to know why she had ever been born and what she had done to be so much more afflicted than others. Poverty, and poor little Ernestine's blindness, and Jean's predilection for wayside cabarets, and George's love of mischief, and head winds, and to cap the climax, a night like this!

It was with reflections of this sort that she enlivened her husband's breakfast and finally lulled him to sleep. He was used to her fretting—women always fretted. When he had not been drinking he didn't mind it—much. After he had had his nap and got the berrichon under way it would not be long before they would reach a certain hamlet that he knew of. He had been virtuous the evening before, and had passed it by with a heart steeled against the attractions of the alehouse; but that was all you got for being virtuous; a day's work lost, and your property all but destroyed! He

would have a night of it at the "Meeting Place of Trackers," let Thérèse scold as she liked.

It was midday when George awoke and found little Ernestine sitting beside him under the bush whose shade he had instinctively sought when he threw himself down to sleep. She was looking off into vacancy, while she mechanically passed through her fingers a string of acorns which George had made to amuse her when her blindness first came on.

"A penny for your thoughts, pussy," he said without moving, after he had watched her a few moments.

Ernestine turned in the direction of his voice. "I was thinking of that Jesus man," she replied.

"What Jesus man?" asked her brother.

"The little girl said he could make me see. But mammy says he is dead a great while ago," and the child threw herself face downward on the ground with bitter tears.

"Curse it!" exclaimed George angrily, at the same time patting his little sister's head with a loving hand. "What has a sweet little thing like you ever done that you should be blind? Curse it, I say," he shouted again, springing to his feet, "I hate the world, I hate everything! Why is it all so mean and cruel?" He raged up and down until he saw that Ernestine was sitting up, her face turned toward him, half terrified. "No matter, little one," he said more quietly, gathering her up in his arms. "Brother George will take care of

you, and one day he will be a man with plenty of money, and he will give little sister everything she wants."

The mother's voice was heard calling George to come for his breakfast, and bring Ernestine; father was awake and they were going now. And while George ate his potato soup, Jean brought out Georgette, and with many oaths and objurgations the *Jolie Charbonnière* was got under way.

It was disheartening work going over the same ground as yesterday. Toward evening Georgette gave evident tokens of weariness, for the night's tussle with the elements had been a vigorous one. She was therefore conducted to her hut, and George and his father laid the hauling gear over their own shoulders and pushed ahead, Jean with the Meeting-place of Trackers in his mind's eye, and George suddenly bethinking himself of the strange boat which had so interested him the day before. He had half hoped yesterday that they might overtake it, but it was out of the question now. Yet what would he not give for permission to go aboard and examine it thoroughly from stem to stern.

"Look out there! What are you about!" growled the father. For George had stopped to pick up something that fluttered on the towpath, and his father had almost run over him. It was a little book of four pages, with a picture on the first page. George hastily stuffed it into his pocket; perhaps it was a pretty tale which would amuse Ernestine. Perhaps it was something even more

amusing, which however he would not read either to her or to his mother. George was only too well able to judge of the quality of the literature that might fall into his hands. Scattered broadcast through the country were newspapers and hand bills containing songs and stories that the men chuckled over in the ale-houses, and that the boys read on the sly—or openly—when the men had thrown them away. And once in a very great while they came upon something that they could give to their mothers to read. The hasty glance that George had been able to give to the picture on this little book made him hope that there was something he could read to his mother, and even that it might amuse Ernestine.

When his father had ceased to grumble, George furtively drew the tract from his pocket. Yes, the picture was one that Ernestine might look at—if only she could see; for the moment George had forgotten the still unfamiliar sorrow, and in a fury of bitterness he crumpled the tract in his fingers. But as he did so a word caught his eye and he stopped so short that again his father almost fell over him. It was the name that had made little Ernestine cry—the name Jesus. The words, JESUS BLESSING THE LITTLE CHILDREN, were printed beneath the picture, and the picture was of a kind-looking man, seated under a tree with little children in his arms and clustered about him, and women standing in the background, also with babies in their arms.

"Then he isn't dead," said George to himself as he tugged on the heavy boat. His heart had suddenly grown light. Jesus was no doubt a traveling doctor who had lately passed this way, dropping his hand-bills to let everyone know. They would overtake him, George would carry Ernestine to him; Ernestine should be made well, cost what it might.

Cost! he had forgotten. Doctors who could travel around the country healing people of blindness were not to be approached without money. And George well knew that his father had none—the cabaret took care of that. His heart, but a moment before so light, sank down like lead. To be so near to the great doctor, the "Jesus man" as little Ernestine called him, and yet to no purpose! Then a new thought struck him that almost made him shout. Those people on the strange boat—they knew this doctor Jesus, knew him well, so well that the little Clarice of whom Ernestine had been talking while he ate his soup had only to ask him and he would do anything. Oh, hurry, hurry! Let them overtake the boat, see little Clarice's father, and beg him to use his influence with the great doctor in behalf of a blind child who had no money. They must, they must, overtake the boat.

"What are you tugging so hard for, youngster?" asked his father with a laugh. "For my part I am about ready to stop. Yonder is the Meeting Place of Fishermen and that is a good mooring

place just this side of it. We've had a hard day and deserve a little comfort."

George looked ahead. The setting sun was shining through the trees upon a riverside hamlet that he knew well. And near by was the mooring place; and oh joy! there was the strange boat, and sitting on the balcony among the vines and flowers were the two little girls and their father and mother. Oh, Ernestine, oh, little sister, we shall find the Jesus man, and he will make you see!

CHAPTER III

Robin Arnaud shook out the last swath from his cradle and straightened his back. The long line of harvesters followed his example and the women rose slowly from their work of binding the sheaves. The wide harvest field, undulating in long sweeps from the hill crest to the river side, here shimmered golden, there lay in rich brown shadows, under the strong light of the young harvest moon. Without a word the weary workers turned their footsteps toward the farm house down in the intervale near the river. But as they approached the home lot Robin stopped short and the others with him, following with their eyes the direction of his extended hand. "Look there!" he had said.

Along the water's edge was a row of lights which seemed to come from a boat, though no berrichon ever carried lights like these. They seemed to shine through windows tall and pointed like the windows of a church; and now as the harvesters looked they heard music floating over from that direction, the rich full voices of a man and a woman singing to the accompaniment of an instrument. The singing was animated, almost lively, not at all like what these people were accustomed to hear on the rare occasions when they walked nine miles to attend the nearest church. Yet it was not like the stirring music of the harvest home,

or the piping melodies of the village festival and the country ball, still less like the coarse song of the drinkers in the cabaret. There was an appeal in this singing that every one of these listeners felt.

"That does one good," said an old crone, bent with years of out-door toil. "My supper can wait till I hear the end of it."

"What is it, do you think?" asked one of the girls softly. "Is that a phantom berrichon do you think, and are those demons who are sing ng there?" she crossed herself hastily and the other women did the same, while the men moved uneasily.

"Bah, demons!" sneered a coarse hulking fellow, "I know what it is. I saw it at Moret before I tramped here for the harvest. It's a boat sure enough, but a queer one. The Moret folk were daft over it, going every night in crowds to hear people sing like that and talk. Talk!" he spit derisively. "They asked me to come aboard—said they would tell me of the love of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ! what is he to me! I'd rather have the love of a pretty wench—hey Mimi?" and he ogled a young woman who stood near.

"Hold your tongue!" shouted Robin angrily. "Drowning the music with your gabble!" He started hastily in the direction of the boat. One or two men followed him, then the young woman Mimi. The others listened till the music died away and then turned toward the farmhouse. They had been at work since early dawn, except for two hours

of uneasy sleep on the ground in the hot August noon, and every joint and muscle cried out for rest.

Robin had forgotten the need of rest in the tumult of his soul at the rude mention of a name that he had once been taught to hold sacred. It was long ago that he had sat on the bench of the "Fathers'" school, and had been taught to read the *Histoire Sainte* by a kind old priest whose reading went little farther than that and his breviary; and in the years of heavy toil and wild recreation that had passed since then, the very name had faded from the young man's memory. But now the picture of the kind old priest—the only friend he had known in the sad childhood of an *enfant trouvé*—rose up before him; he heard the gentle voice telling him something—what was it? he had forgotten; something that warmed his heart. And it was about Jesus Christ, so much he remembered well. For the sake of good old Father Martin he would go to this queer boat and hear something more about this Jesus Christ, who he knew was good, and had done something—he had forgotten what—that was good for us all. And so he strode across the meadow, followed by the little group whose curiosity had overcome their weariness.

The music had died away, and as they drew near the boat a man's voice became audible, speaking earnestly. At the foot bridge that connected the boat with the shore stood a young woman—a servant maid of the better class—who, as they stood

hesitating, softly invited them to come in, and led them into a hall which occupied the greater part of the boat.

It was brightly lighted and had rows of chairs on both sides of a centre aisle. On the walls between the pointed windows were a few colored prints and mottoes in large letters. At the farther end of the hall was a platform with reading desk and harmonium. A sweet-faced young woman was sitting at the harmonium, and it was evidently her husband who stood behind the reading desk talking to some fifty men, women and boys who were seated on the benches nearest him.

Robin and his company dropped into seats near the door. The young man was much too bewildered to grasp at once the meaning of what was being said, and before he was able sufficiently to detach his mind from the surroundings the speaker uttered the word Amen ! and took up a book which lay before him.

"We will sing," he said, "hymn No. 95. Will you please find it, my brothers and sisters, in the books which you hold? You have heard my wife and me sing it. Now shall we all sing it together? We will sing it line by line, my wife and I, and you will repeat it line by line, with us, will you not?"

The player struck the first note, and husband and wife sang clear and strong the words:

Béni soit Jésus Christ:

"*Béni soit Jésus Christ,*" sang the audience in falter-

ing tones; then encouraged by the sound of their own voices they went on bravely:

Il ôte la tristesse,
L'esclave est affranchi,
C'est un jour d'allégresse;
Il nous apporte la liberté,
L'an glorieux de jubilé.*

The young woman at the door came a-tiptoe and opened the book which Robin held unopened in his hand. The first words of the hymn had half dazed him: "Blessed be Jesus Christ." It seemed as if he heard Father Martin saying them, and he tried to remember what had followed. But they were singing all around him, in tones no longer faltering:

This Saviour rich and kind
Offers to all his grace;
In his great loving heart
Each sinner has a place.
This is the true equality
The glorious year of jubilee.

Let us draw near to him
Yield to him now our heart;
Let each one here to-day
Of his love claim a part.
Made one in this fraternity
Let us enjoy the jubilee.

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* Blessed be Jesus Christ
He takes away our grief
He sets the captive free
He brings us glad relief;
His gift to us is liberty
The glorious year of jubilee.

How strangely the words brought back the old days, and yet with what bewildering difference. "Saviour," "sinner," "grace"—yes, Father Martin used to say those words; but "liberty, equality, fraternity"—why, those were the words he heard in the cabaret, the cabaret where they discussed the government, and with the courage gained by a due number of glasses swore to one another that they were anarchists and that the government must needs tremble, for its day was short. Who ever heard before of liberty, equality and fraternity in the same breath with love, and grace, and Saviour, and blessed be Jesus Christ! Were these boat people imbecile?

They were all rising to their feet now, and Robin stumbled up with the others. "Please bow your heads," said the speaker; and then he uttered a few words, clearly addressed to God, addressed to him with the familiar "thou" which would have made Father Martin's blood run cold, and closing with the words "in the name of Jesus Christ our brother, Amen."

Then came a moment of deep silence, and then, almost before the heads were raised, there was a halting footstep outside, the door was pushed open; a bare headed boy with a child in his arms stood blinking in the lamp light, and the fresh voice of a girl-child cried out, "Is Doctor Jesus here?"

Every one turned to face the voice, and the preacher came hastily down the aisle. "Did you come to the meeting, children?" he asked kindly.

"The meeting is over for to-night, and it is late for this little one to be out. To-morrow afternoon there will be a meeting for all the children. Will you come back then?"

George had let Ernestine down from his arms and stood holding her by the hand.

"We can't come to-morrow; we must go on with the berrichon. But we thought Dr. Jesus might be here to-night. I found his hand-bill," and George handed his tract to the preacher.

The preacher's wife had joined them. "Let me speak to them, Nicolas," she said. "You will want a word with our friends as they go out," and she drew them aside.

"What are you doing out of bed this time of night, you poor baby?" she asked, taking Ernestine upon her knee. Then looking into her face, "Why," she exclaimed, "it is the little blind girl, isn't it, that Clarice saw at St. Mammès?"

"Yes, madame," replied George eagerly; "and your little girl told Ernestine that Doctor Jesus could make her see. We didn't know where to find him, because you had gone on before Ernestine told me. But I found his hand-bill to-day, madame, and so when I saw your boat I thought he had not gone any farther, for I know he is a friend of yours. And oh, madame, we have not got any money; but won't you ask him to make Ernestine see, without any pay? He is such a friend of yours, won't you please ask him?"

Long before George had finished speaking Bellah

Pipotin had clasped little Ernestine in her arms, and her eyes had filled with tears. "My boy!" she exclaimed when George paused in his earnest plea, "my poor boy—oh you poor children!" and the tears rained from her eyes.

"Then he isn't here, madame," faltered George, disheartened at her distress. "Is he gone already? Oh, can't you send him word? Don't you know where he is?"

"Nicolas, will you come here?" asked the wife in utter despair, and Nicolas Pipotin, who had just said good-night to the last lingerer, came at her call.

"What is it?" he asked cheerfully, and George told his story again, falteringly and looking from one to the other. He had lost the glad confidence with which he had come to the boat, the exultant hope that soon, very soon, Ernestine would see again. He saw that something was wrong, he could not guess what. Only from the kind lady's tears and the sympathetic attention of her husband he knew that he had done no wrong in coming.

Nicolas Pipotin turned away when George finished speaking and walked once or twice up and down the room. Then returning and seating himself he drew the boy to his side.

"What do you know about Jesus, my boy?" he asked.

"Why, that: what your little girl told Ernestine; that he can make her see."

"And what else?"

"Nothing else. I never heard of him before. I never lived anywhere but just up and down this canal," he added apologetically.

"You did not know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?"

"No; is he?" asked George, deeply interested, and then pausing to reflect. "But then he lives in heaven, and he can't do anything for us;" he concluded, with utter discouragement.

A half smile flitted across the face of Nicolas Pipotin. "He can do much for you, my boy, though not, perhaps, in the way you think. Tell me about your little sister. How long has she been blind?"

George was not listening. Discouragement had gained upon him while Mr. Pipotin was speaking, and a wild desire was taking hold of him to rush away and cry and curse as he had heard his father do when things went wrong. He lifted Ernestine roughly from Mrs. Pipotin's arms, though he did not mean to be rough, and half blinded with tears stumbled toward the door.

"But you musn't go so, dear boy," exclaimed Bellah. "Wait, tell me—"

"It's no good to wait," said George doggedly. "If he ain't here, then it's no good," and wrenching himself from Mr. Pipotin's detaining hand he fled, half choked with sobs, along the tow-path. His little sister, whom he had taken from bed without his mother's knowledge, had fallen asleep in Bellah's arms and hardly stirred as he took her

He stumbled aboard the berrichon, groped his way to Ernestine's cot, and then rushing wildly up the bank he threw himself upon the ground and cried in utter misery.

CHAPTER IV

It was a hard day for poor George. In the dim hour of early dawn his father, coming home much the worse for absinthe, had stumbled over him where he lay, exhausted with despair and tears, asleep on the bank. With oaths and kicks the father had driven him to his bed beside Georgette, but it seemed to the boy that he had hardly fallen asleep when his mother called him.

"It is this afternoon that the cargo is due at Montargis," she said, "and we have more than twenty kilometres yet to go. Father is—asleep," George nodded intelligently—"and you and I must do what we can. Fortunately there is no wind."

No, there was no wind, and the August sun was shining mercilessly from a cloudless sky. The heart of the boy was hot within him as he drove Georgette along the shadeless tow-path. The disappointment of the night before lost none of its bitterness from being mingled with a sense of outrage at his father's conduct. Drink?—yes, no doubt he must drink; that was a way men had, it seemed. But why could he not have waited just one day, till they reached Montargis? A cargo was not difficult to find at that busy junction of canals, and the loss of a day or two would not matter. But now—to leave all the work for George and his mother to do—oh, it was cowardly!

All around him the country lay beautiful with summer glory. On the uplands the harvesters were at work; in groves along the riverside the nightingales were singing full-throated in the shaded daylight; but what was beauty to one blind and deaf with rebellion and rage? When Ernestine came to walk beside him, her little hand in his, the very tenderness with which he guarded her uncertain steps increased the tumult within him. Though he had never pitied her so much he spoke roughly to her.

"Why don't you stay with mother? Getting under Georgette's feet all the time! How can I mind the boat with you to lead?"

The tears that welled from his little sister's sightless eyes made him desperate. His mother's sharp words, upbraiding him for his unkindness, were as fuel to a flame. He broke out into oaths, such as his father had made familiar to him, and for a while there was a tempest of curses, recriminations, and childish sobs.

It was broken by a loud bray from Georgette. That intelligent animal, grown familiar with weather signs and their significance, had for some time been aware that the wind was rising, and she quite understood by the unusual noise with which the *Jolie Charbonnière* butted her blunt prow into the water and the commotion with which the swirling waves swept by, that it was a wind which boded no good to boat or donkey. Already the tug upon her tackle warned her that the stern of the berri-

chon was swinging outward toward mid-river, and that if aid were slow to come she would be dragged into the stream, when once the side of the boat was presented to the wind.

Georgette's cry of alarm was perfectly well understood by those whom it most concerned. In a moment George was flying along the tow-path crying "father! father!" with all the strength of his lungs. It was not enough to brace himself and Georgette against the dragging berrichon. Some one must steady the craft with a rope at the stern, and Thérèse, encumbered with Ernestine, could never arrive in time to prevent a catastrophe.

Jean Poêle had slept off the effects of his carouse, and was staring vacantly at the roof of his cabin, when his son's call roused him to the consciousness of danger. It was the work of only a moment to spring out of bed, run nimbly along the broad gunwale to the stern, seize the end of a coiled up rope, run forward to the prow, and give a desperate leap ashore. None too soon; Georgette was holding on by her toes to the sloping edge of the path. The sudden check to the outward drag of the boat gave her an opportunity to regain her footing, and she bravely lent her aid in the tussle with wind and water which ensued.

The worst was over in half an hour, but there was work for all hands until a bend in the river changed their relation to the wind. Even then

A SERMON FOR TWO—SEE PAGE 35

there was no time for rest. Montargis was still a long way off, much time had been lost, and it behooved them all to be active. In the weariness of protracted work George forgot the tumult of his soul, and when at last they reached Montargis and Georgette was conducted to her stall, George was quite ready to join the other tracker children in running along the gunwales and leaping from boat to boat of the "train" which was making ready for the long journey to the sea by the Orleans canal and the river Loire. For the time he forgot his weariness, forgot his troubles. In the excitement of meeting certain boys from whom he had been several months parted he forgot even Ernestine's blindness, and it was nothing to him that the intelligent Georgette, having finished her supper, was at that moment making a third at the sermon in which his mother was taking occasion to set before his father the reprehensible character of his conduct of the night before.

Next morning there was the hurry and bustle of unloading the cargo, and the seeking of another. In which direction would it send them? Back to St. Mammès or southward toward Briare? George hoped it would be the former. In that case they would surely meet the strange boat again, and he already repented of having left it so hastily, without being quite, quite sure that the little Clarice was mistaken when she said that Jesus could make Ernestine see. It was with a sinking heart that he heard his father negotiating to carry a load of

pottery southward to Chatillon, and his feet were like lead as he helped carry the cases aboard the *Jolie Charbonnière*.

They were to start southward with the earliest dawn, and George, wearied out with the emotions and the labors of the past three days, had lain down beside Georgette as soon as he had had his supper. How long he had slept he knew not, when he was awakened by his mother's voice:

"Get up, George, quick, and help me with father! He has fallen and hurt himself."

The dawn was breaking as George emerged from the hut, rubbing his eyes. In one of the compartments of the berrichon his father lay in a heap on the packing cases, his mother trying vainly to help him to rise. Jean Poêle had been celebrating his good luck in receiving pay for one trip and a cargo for a second all in one day; and coming home somewhat the worse for his rejoicing, but still sufficiently master of himself to intend to get the berrichon at once under way, he had managed to slip as he stepped on the gunwale, and had fallen with one leg twisted under him.

It needed only a few moments to make certain that the leg was broken. And that meant an indefinite stay at Montargis with no means of livelihood, and the added expense of transshipping the cargo to another boat. At first, in despairing recognition of all that was involved in the delay, Thérèse was for going on. She would take Jean's place on the tow-path; George and she could man-

age somehow, with good little Georgette's help. But Jean, thoroughly sober now, convinced her that this was a mistake. He had, indeed, but to remind her of the events of the past three days to show her that she was mistaken. She and the boy were impotent indeed in hours of danger such as might at any time occur in any one of a variety of forms. There was nothing to do but send George for the parish doctor as soon as he was likely to be awake, and after the leg was set to lend her own strong arms to the sorrowful task of transshipping the load, which only the day before she had hopefully helped to put aboard the *Jolie Charbonnière*.

The days lengthened into weeks while Jean lay helpless. The children wandered about together, George caring for his little sister while sometimes picking berries, sometimes gathering up stray lumps of charcoal for the furnace that stood in the narrow passage just outside the cabin door. There were times when he left Ernestine with his mother —a look of intelligence passing between them as he went away. And when he came back there would be turnips or potatoes in his pockets, and in the front of his blouse; or more rarely, fruit from the walls of a distant country house, or bones filched from the butcher's stall when he was not looking. Yet even with this surreptitious marketing the tracker family fared poorly. There had been none too large a portion of Jean's earnings when he returned from the cabaret, and as the days went on

there was less and less food. Ernestine cried sometimes for hunger, and then George, growing desperate, would think of the strange boat and of the kind lady's tears, and wish—how earnestly, that the *Bon Berger* would come to Montargis.

CHAPTER V

M. LE CURÉ was disturbed. His morning soup was growing cold while he paced up and down the brick floored dining-room, now muttering to himself, now straightening out a crumpled newspaper, and again crushing it angrily together as his eyes fell upon a certain paragraph.

A footstep sounded on the tiles of the passage and he hastily seated himself at the table, drawing toward him the bowl of half congealed soup.

"Anything wrong with the soup, Antoine?" exclaimed a strong cheerful voice through the opening door. "One would say that old Nannette should understand her kitchen if she understood nothing else."

"There is nothing wrong with the soup, Lucie," replied the young priest. "I was only thinking and forgot to begin."

"Thinking!" An expression of surprise crossed the woman's face; she looked vaguely around the bare room, and her eyes fell upon the newspaper, crumpled up in a far corner. She picked it up, and smoothed it out. "See here," said the priest taking it from her hand, and she stood over him as he still sat at the table, and read where his finger indicated.

As she stood thus it was plain that these were brother and sister. Both were tall and fair, both

had the large meditative eyes of the beautiful white cattle of their own Nivernais hills, but there the resemblance ceased. Into the face of Lucie Chardonnet had passed the strength and significance of years of self-sacrificing struggle. Like many other women of her country, like Henriette Renan and Annette Coppée, of neither of whom, however, she had ever heard, like many another not less devoted though less distinguished, her life had been given to fit this younger brother for the priesthood. For his sake she had left her home, a timid girl of sixteen, and endured four years of privations indescribable that she might pass the examinations necessary to gain a position as village schoolmistress. For his sake she had worked hard and fared meanly for ten years more, sparing every possible sou to aid him in his studies. And now in her youthful prime of thirty years the reward had come; first on the day when Antoine took priest's orders, and a few weeks later when—oh, supererogation of joy! she had been appointed to the post of schoolmistress in Antoine's own parish, a modest church in an outlying part of Montargis; her schoolhouse facing his "presbytery" with the little church between. To attend mass on Sunday and hear his voice intoning the prayers, to visit him daily in the early mornings and the evenings after her long day's work was done, to superintend old Nannette, immemorial queen of the casseroles and marmites of the presbytery kitchen, this was a joy so exquisite that a single week of it had far outweighed the

rigors of fourteen years. As she stood over her brother the hand that lay upon his shoulder trembled with the still unfamiliar emotion, even while her heart swelled with indignant sympathy as she followed with her eyes the pointing of his finger.

DECLARATION OF WAR!

THE FOREIGN ENEMY UPON US!

The mischief-working boat, spy, envoy of our enemies, subsidized by England and—who knows to the contrary? —by Germany perhaps, has arrived in our midst. Externally it looks peaceable enough: it even takes on the guise of a church. Citizens of Montargis, beware of the boat which calls itself the Good Shepherd but is indeed a veritable wolf, seeking to devour your souls! Make a stand for your faith, the holy Catholic faith, the only true religion!

Citizens, civil war is declared in France, and the proof of it is this lying boat that comes among us seeking to turn us into enemies of the fatherland. It is well known that who says Catholic says Frenchman, who says Protestant says German. This nefarious boat is seeking to turn you into Protestants, that is, into enemies of your country.

Shall it remain here in peace? Shall it be permitted to go hence, scattering the seeds of revolution? A word to the wise is enough.

"Is such wickedness possible!" the sister exclaimed when she had finished reading. "What shall you do, Antoine?"

"Do!" he exclaimed, striking the table with his fist; "not what they have been doing at Moret and Corbeil, of that you may be sure! You did not see

in *La Croix* of last week how the curé of a certain parish went aboard of this devil's church to sprinkle it with holy water, and so well exorcised the evil one that he left the boat, it would appear, and entered the priest, for from that time every night the reverend father attended the meetings and sang hymns with the others. Pah!" he pushed back the soup and rose from his chair.

"Your people will not go to the boat if you warn them not," suggested the sister, hopefully.

"My people," exclaimed the young priest, "where are they? Who are they? Not a corporal's guard of men in church last Sunday. A couple of score of old women, the beneficiaries, and the school children. A hopeful congregation for a man who has spent ten years learning to say mass!"

"But they have hardly seen you officiate yet, Antoine," said the sister admiringly. "Once you become known the men will come to church. Only warn them against that dreadful boat, Antoine."

"I shall do something more than warn," said the priest looking around for his hat.

"But, Antoine, you have not breakfasted. And your soup is cold. Let me call Nannette to warm it. And there was something I wanted to speak to you about."

The priest sat down while his sister bustled out into the kitchen. Thence returning presently with a steaming bowl she placed the bread and the salt within reach and sat down where she could feast her eyes on her adored brother's face.

"What was it you wanted to tell me," he asked, breaking his bread into the bowl.

"About two children who have been coming to school. They are tracker children, and the father, it seems, has been laid up with a broken leg for a month past. They look half starved, Antoine, and they are such nice children. The little girl is blind, poor thing! I am sure they must be in want, and I thought—if there are any parish funds—"

"But they do not belong to the parish, Lucie, they have no right to parish aid. Nor have they probably any commune. It is always hard for the tracker people, you know, for that very reason."

"I know; yet I thought, perhaps—the little girl is so thin, poor child! And the boy is very bright and quick. It is easy to see that he would be a daring spirit in times of prosperity; even now he is all alive, though I am sure that he is hungry all the time. Don't you think you could do something for them? If you spoke to the Mayor, for example—"

The priest slowly shook his head as he finished his soup. Then a thought seemed to strike him. "I'll see," he said, taking up his hat and hurrying away.

M. le curé was very busy all day. First there was a visit to pay at the Mayor's office—a not very satisfactory visit to judge from the scowling brow with which he came out. Then down to the water-side among the men and boys who were idling there. He did not visit the *Bon Berger*, which was

moored near the bridge on one of the many lovely water ways of the pretty little inland Venice, but he often looked over toward it as he talked with the loungers, and at the close of each brief interview they would look admiringly after the young priest and say to one another, "He is a smart one, he is. The devil would have hard work to get the best of him." It was late afternoon when he drew near to the *Jolie Charbonnière*, which was moored out of the way of traffic in an unfrequented spot. Jean Poêle, nearly recovered from his accident, was standing outside his cabin door leaning on two sticks. With very evident surprise he saw the priest approach the berrichon, and answered gruffly, when the young man asked, "Is is permitted to come aboard?"

"As you please, M. le curé."

The priest sprang lightly to the broad gunwale, and took with a word of thanks the stool which Thérèse brought from the cabin.

"You have had an accident, my man," he said.

"Broken leg, worse luck!" growled Jean.

"And things have gone badly no doubt."

"What will you have? A father of a family laid up for a month."

"And no commune, M. le curé," interposed Thérèse, "even the parish doctor to pay who set Jean's leg."

"And your little girl blind, the schoolmistress tells me. Yes, you must have been tried. And your boy hardly old enough to be of much use."

THE BON BERGER AT MONTARGIS—SEE PAGE 44

"He is a sturdy little chap and does what he can," said the father proudly. "But he isn't strong enough to serve the boat alone."

"You would like him to earn a couple of francs?" said the priest interrogatively.

"Why not?" asked the father. "What is the work?"

"Just to spend an evening on that boat over yonder and obey orders."

"That boat," said Thérèse with interest, following the direction in which he was pointing. "Why, I didn't know it was here. George will be wild when he sees it. He has taken the notion, poor child, that if he can only see the people on the boat he can get his little sister cured."

"Cured! how? Those are not doctors."

"No, but the little girl said that Jesus could make Ernestine see, and though I have explained to him that Jesus has long been dead and is now in heaven with the good God, he will not give up hope. But I have been thinking, M. le curé, that perhaps it might be done if one prayed aright to the saints. Do you think so?" The mother's voice trembled with anxiety.

"It never comes amiss to pray," replied the priest gently, "and the saints are often kind."

"M. le curé," said the mother, eagerly, "I have a thought, perhaps the good God sent it because you are here, for never a priest came to the *Jolie Charbonnière* before. In my country, in the Morvan hills, there is the Turning Stone. Do you know it?"

The priest shook his head. "It is a great pilgrimage though," continued the mother. "I have never been, but I know those who have, and who have received wonderful reward—cattle healed of distemper, husbands made faithful, and even the gift of children, when they had been long married without any. Do you think the Turning Stone could give back her sight to my little one? In winter, when the boat is laid up, I would make the pilgrimage if you thought it would do good."

The despairing earnestness of the poor mother touched the young priest's heart. "A good work always does good," he said with a little huskiness in his throat. "Never despair of what God and the saints can do. But yonder come the children. I have your permission to engage the boy?"

And pressing a five franc piece into Thérèse's hand he sprang lightly ashore.

CHAPTER VI

"They are coming, mother, they are coming," exclaimed little Clarice. "I see father, and a lady and gentleman with him."

Bellah Pipotin laid down the pile of illustrated newspapers which she was distributing on the chairs in the hall of the *Bon Berger* and came out upon the platform. Her two children had already crossed the footbridge, climbed the bank and were running up the road, under the red-flowering plantains, to meet their father and his guests.

"It is so good of you to come and help my husband," said Bellah when the party had been welcomed to the boat. "I know that the pastor of a church in a great city must be overtaxed with his own work."

"There is truly no lack of work in Sens," replied the pastor. "But whether much or little, I can imagine no circumstances under which Mrs. Brodart and I would not rejoice in an opportunity to serve the McAll Mission."

"You have known it long?" asked Nicolas Pipotin, as the party seated themselves on the platform.

"And owe it everything," the pastor replied. "Tell them, Fifine, how it came about."

"We were wandering show people," said the pastor's wife. "I was a little dancing girl, Désiré

was with a *Guignol* show. We were in Paris one winter—I was ten years old, and Désiré fourteen. I strayed into a Sunday-school of the mission and after a time Désiré too came to know it. It is impossible to tell how good some of the workers in the mission were to us. Through them I found my grand-parents, and Désiré received his education. For several years we worked in one of the Paris halls, before Désiré was ordained and became a pastor."

"Dear Mrs. Brodart," exclaimed Bellah, "how wonderful that your story should be so like mine—though with a difference. For I, too, belonged to wandering show people, and it was through the mission that I and all the family learned to know Christ, and also that my father learned that he had fallen heir to a fortune."

"No wonder that I felt from the moment I saw you that there was a bond of union between us," said the pastor's wife laying her hand affectionately on that of the younger woman. "And was Mr. Pipotin one of *us* too?" she added smiling.

"Not quite," replied Nicolas, "though I was wanderer enough, so far as that goes. I was a sailor, and shipped at Nantes on the *Mystery*, the boat that was lent to Mr. McAll for work in the seaport towns. It was on that boat that I learned to know Christ, and it was through the kind friends on the boat that I gained my best earthly treasure, for though Bellah and I had loved one another before, her father would never have consented to

our marraige but for the good offices of those friends, and for the education which under their influence I succeeded in acquiring."

While Nicolas was speaking, his little daughter Anna whispered in her mother's ear, at the same time directing her attention to a boy who stood at a short distance on the bank, apparently anxious, yet afraid to come nearer. "A belated visitor," said Bellah, half apologetically as she passed before Mrs. Brodart on the crowded little platform. "I thought all the boys of Montargis had been here since school closed this afternoon, but I am sure this one was not among them." She crossed the footbridge and held out her hand. "Did you want to see the boat, my boy?" she asked kindly.

The boy looked this way and that, as if half terrified, then suddenly springing to her side he said hoarsely:

"Look out! They mean to harm you!" and would have run away, but Bellah caught him by the arm.

"Wait! what do you mean?" she asked. "Who means to harm me?"

The boy struggled to get free. "I daren't tell you any more," he panted. "Let me go! I must go!"

He wrenched himself from her grasp, but Nicolas and Mr. Brodart were on each side of him, and he found escape impossible.

"What is the matter, boy?" asked Nicolas somewhat sternly. 'Come on board of the boat and give an account of yourself."

"I mustn't; Idaren't," said the boy piteously. "Oh, I oughtn't to have come, but *she* kissed Ernestine and I can't bear— Please let me go," he implored.

"Nicolas," exclaimed Bellah, "I do believe it is that poor boy who brought his blind little sister to us. Yes, it is surely he. Don't be frightened, my boy. No harm shall come to you. Come on board the boat and tell us all about it."

George burst into tears. "Don't keep me, lady," he entreated. "Father will beat me if he knows I came—he is well enough to beat me, now. And M. le curé hired me—he gave my mother five francs, and I must, I must"—sobs choked him. "But now you know, can't you be watchful? And if you see me with the others, oh, please believe I wouldn't have come, only M. le curé gave my mother money, and Ernestine is so hungry—" with a sudden effort he tore himself free and fled.

"What does it all mean, Nicolas?" asked Bellah, as the three returned to the boat.

"It is very evident," said Mr. Brodart, "that the parish priest has taken measures to make a disturbance on the boat this evening, in the hope of forcing you to leave Montargis. If so, it will not be the first time, as you probably know. And now that, as the boy says, we are warned, I do not imagine that anything very disastrous is likely to occur. Fifine has had a little experience in that line, and we may do worse than put ourselves under her direction."

Mrs. Brodart smiled as Nicolas and his wife turned to her. "It was nothing," she said, "though it might have been something. It was a good many years ago, Mr. McAll was urged to open a hall in one of the suburbs of Paris—outside of the fortifications, where the police knew nothing of the mission. I was there one evening with two other young women, making ready for the service, which was to be conducted by one of the most prominent pastors of Paris. Just as we were about to open the door the concièrge whispered to me that the priest and the parish doctor had hired a gang of roughs to come in and break up the meeting. Unfortunately the pastor, for the only time in his life, I think, was late and so large a crowd had collected in the street that we dared not keep the doors shut. So I sat down at the harmonium, and told the other girls to let the people in only one at a time and to seat every *young* man directly in front of me. And there I sat and played to them, and looked them all straight in the eyes—and made them look into mine—till the pastor came. That was all."

Bellah drew a long breath. "I think I understand what that 'all' was," she said. "Will you take the harmonium to-night, Mrs. Brodart?"

"Certainly, if you wish it," was the reply, and then Bellah went away to put her little girls to bed, while the others consulted briefly as to the best methods to forestall any possible disturbance.

The hour for the meeting was approaching, and

already little groups of people had gathered on the bank or were approaching by the highway, when a clean looking farmer of almost colossal build stepped upon the footbridge, and with a respectful gesture of greeting, said: "I came to see if you are really my brothers, or if you are only wolves in sheep's clothing."

"Do you love the Lord Jesus?" asked Nicolas, rising and holding out his hand. "If so, you will find us your brothers, and if not we shall do our best to make you our brother by bringing you to a knowledge of him."

The man gave Nicholas a hearty shake of the hand. "I see," he said, "that you are of the right sort. I shall gladly stay and hear what you have to say. My name is Tréville."

He passed into the hall, now brilliantly lighted. The groups upon the bank had apparently been waiting only for a good example, for they began to stream in. It was in accordance with the suggestion given by Mrs. Brodart in her story that Bellah, who relieved of her usual duty at the harmonium was aiding her maid at the door, ushered all the younger men to seats at the upper end of the room, directly in front of the instrument. Once she caught a glance of approbation from Fifine's eye as she seated directly before her a rough, sullen-looking fellow of about twenty. There was no sign of anything untoward, however, when Nicolas arose to open the meeting by giving out a hymn, and the stirring melody, sung by the

four well-trained voices, seemed to command all attention. One by one others joined in the singing, and Bellah breathed a sigh of relief as the unusual volume of song—for a first meeting—seemed to show an unusual interest in the service. As the last line was sung, George crept in, and with a frightened glance at Bellah sat down near the door.

After the hymn Mr. Brodart rose to speak. He had uttered only a few sentences when he became aware of a strong, suffocating odor. He went on with his address, however; but Nicolas, who also perceived the offensive smell and was at leisure to look for its cause, soon discovered a young man in the front row furtively drawing from under his blouse a distended ball and squeezing it, to the very evident increase of the vile odor. Rising to his feet, and begging permission of his colleague to speak, Nicolas looked the group of young men in the face and said :

" My friends, when you were invited to pass an evening on this boat it was for you to decide whether or not you would accept the invitation. But having accepted it, having consented to be our guests, it behooves you to act in a courteous and orderly manner. I now request those of you who have transgressed the bounds of propriety to leave this hall, and warn you that I shall see that the law of the land is obeyed which protects us in our rights."

Several of the young men sprang to their feet; one or two advanced in a threatening way toward

the platform, one shouted, "Devil worshippers! devil worshippers!" and another, "Down with the English spies!" Two or three women screamed; several started for the door. Suddenly Tréville darted forward, and seizing the burliest of the roughs by the collar, shot him through the open window into the canal. The splash of his fall seemed to throw cold water on the excitement, and Tréville, placing himself before the platform, exclaimed, "Are there any other hotheads who want cooling? Let those who do not, sit down, or let them leave the boat."

Nearly every one sat down. Two of the young men seemed to hesitate, but as Tréville reached out a warning hand they sank into their seats. The champion faced the platform and saying, "Now, my brothers, we are ready to hear what you have to say," he calmly seated himself in the place left vacant by his summary ejectment of the ringleader, and Mr. Brodart went on with his address as if there had been no interruption.

The whole transaction had been so sudden and so brief that Bellah down by the door had hardly had time to realize what was taking place. But afterward she remembered a white, scared face that had flashed past her, and looking at his place she saw that George was gone.

CHAPTER VII

GEORGE looked back over his shoulder as he fled, listening for the dreaded sounds of conflict. None reached him, and gradually he slackened his pace, came to a halt, and still trembling with excitement and terror slowly faced around toward the boat.

All was quiet; only the lights shining brightly through the colored windows gave token of its existence. Almost unconsciously he began to walk toward it, as if drawn by a power outside of himself. As he drew near a strain of music broke the silence. It thrilled the excited boy as if some one had shaken him. Trembling he drew nearer and nearer. The outer platform was vacant, and stealing across the bridge he crouched down outside of the open door. The music swelled and died away, and then four sweet voices joined in a simple harmony :

Jesus est notre ami suprême
Oh, quel amour ! *

For a moment the boy, absorbed in the concord of sweet sounds, heeded not the words; but as the verse was repeated, their meaning dawned upon him. Jesus ! So it was true after all : he was the best friend of these people on the boat, and his

*Jesus is our best friend,
Oh, how he loves !

mother was mistaken in thinking that he was dead.

He knows our every pain
He gives us hope again
In us his power shall reign,
Oh, how he loves!

sang the voices.

"Hope again!" "how he loves!" The boy's heart beat thick and fast. Oh, that the people would go away, that he might see that kind lady and ask her to tell him how and where he might find this loving, best friend of hers! This time he would not leave her till he knew it all.

But—M. le curé! And his father! What would they say, what would they do to him if they knew that he was trying to make friends with the people he had been hired to molest? They were bad people, M. le curé had said, who were plotting to harm everybody. And yet the lady had kissed Ernestine, and cried because she was blind; how could she be bad? Could M. le curé, like his mother, be mistaken? And suppose they were bad, what did he care, if they would but persuade that best friend of theirs, that Jesus, to make Ernestine see.

He softly crossed the footbridge and hid in a clump of bushes on the bank. He would wait till every one was gone and then—

A quiet step sounded on the pebbles of the path—a figure in a long black robe drew near as if to hide behind these very bushes. It was M. le curé! And with his heart in his throat George crept away under the shadow of the bank, and having gained a

safe distance sped away home, this time without looking once behind him.

A few minutes later the meeting closed. The champion of the early part of the evening said a quiet word to the young men among whom he was sitting, and while the others were coming up to the platform for a few words with the preachers and their wives, he rather pointedly escorted them to the door and saw them safely across the footbridge. Then returning, he waited until the last lingerer had gone, and offered his services to escort Mr. and Mrs. Brodart to their hotel.

"Those fellows havn't had their fill yet," he observed. "It is better not to take any risks."

Désiré accepted the proffered escort, and as they walked along the lonely road that led from the waterside to the town, he asked Tréville how it came about that he was of their way of thinking on religious matters.

"My parents were Protestants," replied the man. "But as there were no other Protestants in Chatillon, near which we lived, nor any temple* in any neighboring city, I grew up entirely without religious instruction."

"Like so many of the scattered Protestants of our country," observed Fifine.

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*A Protestant church is called a temple in France. Strictly speaking the word applies only to the established churches, Lutheran and Reformed; the independent churches (Free, Baptist, Methodist) are chapels. But in general the word temple is used of any Protestant church.

Tréville assented, and added, "Strangely enough, my conversion came about through my bad habit of drinking too much. I was in a wine shop on a Sunday afternoon, when a colporteur came in with his bag of Bibles and tracts. I had taken just wine enough to make me foolish, and in a sort of bravado I bought one of his books."

"And reading it brought you to a knowledge of the Saviour?" asked Mr. Brodart.

"No," replied Tréville, "for I did not know how to read, at that time. But my wife did. She, too, was a Protestant, and a good woman. She used to read the Bible to me, and it impressed me a good deal. I found it interesting. Still I did not give up drinking, nor did I think of myself as a sinner, until one evening when I had gone to Paris on some business I strayed into a hall of the Popular Mission—the McAll Mission, some call it. You know it sir?"

"This boat belongs to it," replied Mr. Brodart.

"I suspected as much when I heard the hymns," said Tréville. "For it was a hymn that first awakened my conscience. They were singing, 'I love Jesus, he's my Saviour,' and that hymn, with God's blessing, made me a new man."

"And you learned to read after that?" asked Fifine.

"Yes; that was sixteen years ago. My wife died the next year, and as I had children and a farm, I married again, a good woman though a Catholic. I could never have held out but for the Bible, for

there is still no temple in our part of the country. I hope the boat will come our way, sir. You would meet a better welcome than that of to-night. Our neighbors are ignorant but they are worthy people, and tired—let me say in confidence—heartily tired of the religion, or rather the no-religion, that they profess. I hope the boat is coming our way, sir.''

''Chatillon is on the route marked out for it,'' replied the pastor. ''Here is our hotel and thank you for your company. We shall meet on the boat to-morrow?''

''As for that, I was returning home to-morrow, having completed my errand here. But I think I will stay and see you through one more evening. If the priest really is at the bottom of to-night's business you are not through with it, I fancy.''

Bellah felt sure that the trouble had blown over, when with the rising sun people began to come to the boat, curious to examine it and many of them eager to ask questions on religious subjects.

Almost the first was an old man of eighty, who said that he had been a believer since he was ten years old.

''But in my time folk were not allowed to go around preaching as you do. I remember well how the few Protestants in our neighborhood used to go out into the woods sometimes for a service, and how the gendarmes used to hunt us out and disperse us. Then came religious liberty, in 1871, and after that there was no more hunting of Protestants. But there were no more meetings, either.

People seemed not to care about them, so long as nobody minded whether they had them or not. I can't tell you how happy it made me last night to come to this boat and hear some one talk about Christ and heavenly things."

A group of men and women came running to the boat, some of them with the remnants of their breakfast in their hands. They lived, they explained, in a village three miles away; they had heard of this wonderful boat and they had run all the way to have a peep at it before going to their work in the fields. Anna and little Clarice proudly escorted them over the boat, showing them all the conveniences, while Bellah looked out tracts and Gospels to distribute among them. They were overwhelmed with admiration and gratitude, and insisted upon leaving a few cents each, "for the work," before they said good-bye and started, on the run, for their field work three miles away.

Of course the boys began to come early and could hardly tear themselves away. But "the captain-lady" as they called her, was inexorable in sending them off before school time, only promising them that as it was Thursday and a half-holiday they might all come at two o'clock and have a meeting of their own.

"We don't need any lunch," pleaded several of them. "Let us come at twelve;" but Bellah laughingly told them that two was early enough. "Bring your sisters," she added, "and the grandparents may come, too, if they are too old to go out at night."

George was not among these self-sacrificing visitors. With the first peep of daylight it was his duty to lead Georgette into the woods for her breakfast. Poor Georgette was having a hard time in these days; for small as was her appetite even the little that sufficed to answer its demands was very hard to come by. More than once she had herself assumed control of affairs by escaping from the scanty herbage of the woods into some carefully tended meadow; quite ignorant, with all her intelligence, that by such conduct she was not only jeopardizing her master's liberty but her own.

To-day George was rather relieved than otherwise when, rousing himself from absorbed consideration of the possibility of yet finding Doctor Jesus, he discovered that Georgette was gone. Much pleasanter to spend the morning in searching for her than to run the risk of facing M. le curé at school!

But the afternoon found him at the boat amid a crowd of boys. It was still too early. Mr. Pipotin would not let them come aboard, but he had distributed some picture papers among them, and for the moment they were satisfied. As George arrived, however, they were called to come in, and needed no second summons. The "captain-lady" was seated at the harmonium.

"Come and sing with me, boys," she said, brightly. "Here are books with the words." She struck a few notes. "Sing after me, line by line:

"Redites moi l'histoire."

"Redites moi l'histoire," sang the boys with faltering tones, but encouraged by the sound they went on bravely through the first verse of "Tell me the old, old story."

"Again," said Bellah, and still "again," until the notes rang out lustily, and half a dozen head-kerchiefed old crones who had strayed in nodded with delight.

"That is well done," said Bellah approvingly, at the fifth repetition. "Now take your seats, and let the girls at the back come forward and listen to the story I shall tell you. Listen well, for it will be your turn to tell it to me by-and-bye."

She unrolled a large brightly colored picture as she spoke and hung it on the wall before them. It showed a crowd of people in strange bright-colored robes, and opposite them a man in rags with closed eyes reaching out imploring hands to one who stood at the head of the crowd, a man of sweet countenance, dressed in white, who looked lovingly upon the poor beggar.

The "captain lady" began at once to tell how Jesus when he was on earth went around doing good, healing the sick and telling people of the love of God and what they must do to please him; and then she told the whole beautiful story of how he restored the sight of the blind beggar Bartimæus. George eagerly drank in every word. He *could* do it then, this Jesus; he could cure Ernestine as he had cured the beggar, who had no more money

than they. How could he wait for the meeting to end? Restlessly he looked around and just behind him he saw his mother with Ernestine on her knee.

CHAPTER VIII

"And here's my little blind girl again!" said Bellah Pipotin, making her way through the group of children at the close of the meeting. She laid her hand on the child's head as she spoke.

A happy smile lit up Ernestine's face. "I'm going to see again pretty soon," she said.

"She talks of nothing else," explained the mother. "Ever since your little girl spoke to her, a month ago, she has taken the notion that somehow she'll get her eyesight again, poor lamb!"

All George's heart was in his eyes as he looked to see the effect of this remark upon the captain-lady. Would she offer now, at last, to tell them how to find Dr. Jesus? Had not she just told them how good and kind this Jesus was, and how he had healed the blind man in the picture?

The captain-lady did not offer to take Ernestine to this kind friend of hers. Instead, she seated herself, and taking Ernestine upon her knee she began to talk with the mother, asking about their journey hither and how they came to be staying at Montargis so long a time, and receiving in return a recital of all Thérèse's woes and her wonderment why she should be thus afflicted.

George broke in almost before his mother had finished.

"But we don't mind those things, Madame, if only Ernestine could see. Won't you tell me, please, how we can find Jesus? I want to take Ernestine to him right now."

The captain-lady drew the boy toward her.

"Do you know how good and kind Jesus is, my boy?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed, Madame," he answered confidently. "At first I did not dare go to him because I had no money. But now I know he will do it, just because he is so kind."

"Do you believe that he loves you?" she asked.

"He doesn't know us yet, Madame, but I am sure he will be good to us, when he does know us."

"And if he didn't do what you asked, would you still feel sure that he was kind and good?"

George looked troubled. "But he would, wouldn't he? He did for the others. And he can!"

"Dear boy, listen. Jesus is indeed kind. He loves you and me and everybody more than we can think. He is the Son of God, and he was happy in heaven with God. But he saw that in this world people were wicked, and unhappy because they were wicked, because they did not know how much God loves them and wants them to be good. And so he left his happy home in heaven with God, and came to this world to show us how God loves us and wants us to be good and happy. He suffered many things; he was poor, and wicked people were very cruel to him and at last killed him, but all the

time he was doing kind things, making the blind see and healing the sick and comforting the unhappy, just to show people how God loves them, so that they might love him in return and try to please him by being good. Now he has gone back to heaven to live with his Father God. He does not always do the same thing for us that he did when he was here, but he loves us dearly, and he wants us to love him and to believe that if he does not do everything we ask, it is because it is really not best for us."

Bellah had spoken very slowly and distinctly, in as simple words as she could find, looking straight into George's eyes the while. She saw his expression change from surprise through bewilderment to blank disappointment and then become bright with hope.

"How can we ask him, Madame?" he inquired eagerly.

"By speaking to him in our hearts; he knows all we think and he loves to have us pray to him, and ask him for the things we want."

"And I may ask him to make Ernestine see?"

Bellah hesitated. "Yes, you may ask him, my boy, but remember if he does not do as you ask he loves you still."

George's eyes shone. "He will do it, Madame. I am sure of that. I know how kind he is. I will keep on asking, and he will do it. Come, Ernestine."

He took his little sister by the hand, and followed by his mother, went away.

IN THE BON BERGER—SEE PAGE 67

The boat was crowded that evening, a large proportion of the audience being women. There were no young men, a suspicious circumstance it seemed to Mr. Brodart. Tréville came and took a seat beside the platform next to Mrs. Brodart, as Nicolas rose to give out the opening hymn.

There was an attentive silence as he read the first verse; but as Fifine struck the opening notes on the harmonium a prolonged tattoo was heard on the bank outside, followed by the voice of the town crier proclaiming an auction on the following day.

Tréville was springing to his feet, when he felt a detaining hand on his shoulder. "Don't move," Mrs. Brodart whispered; "it will only excite the audience; just sing with all your voice."

She began to sing and Tréville immediately joined. The people looked this way and that, some of them inclined to laugh, others to be indignant, but one by one they began to sing, and soon the sound of the drum retreated into the distance.

When Mr. Brodart rose to speak there was perfect quiet. His first words, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," seemed to meet a response from his hearers. He went on to show how rest was a thing of the spirit, not of the body; that it consisted not in inaction, nor even in repose, but in being in such accord with one's circumstances as to find in them a delight, and refreshment in every new experience. The only way to attain this accord with the actual, he pointed out, was through that confidence in God

which we gain by learning to know him in Jesus Christ. Therefore it is only the truly religious man who can enjoy true rest.

Expressions of sympathy met his eyes from the eyes of many in his audience, but a man half way down the hall sprang to his feet, exclaiming, "Preacher, you do not believe what you say, for you know that the church is the mother of iniquities, and religion is only the art of making fools of ourselves."

In a moment the hall was in a turmoil; many hissed for silence, but a dozen strong voices cried out, "To the struggle, Bonnet, to the struggle!"

Désiré at once recognized the import of the cry. More than once in the recent weeks a low newspaper called *The Struggle* had come under his notice, a violently anarchistic sheet, edited and mainly written by a certain Gaspard Bonnet, who he knew had lately been discharged from a two year's imprisonment for having advocated the murder of the rich and the burning of their houses. Evidently this was Bonnet.

Raising his hand, Mr. Brodart commanded silence, and then politely addressing the anarchist he reminded him that this was not a debating society, but a religious meeting, and that the order usually observed at a religious meeting must be kept. Bonnet, however, remained standing.

"You are teaching pernicious doctrine," he shouted. "You aim to make men satisfied with present conditions by holding out a hope of another

life after death. I declare that a life after death is neither useful, nor agreeable, nor necessary. There is no life beyond the grave; it is a frightful thought. What we want is to make this life worth living by overturning the existing order and freeing every man from tyranny."

"If you will sit down," replied Mr. Brodart mildly, but with an expression in his eye that seemed to command obedience, "I will tell you that this is precisely what the religion that we preach aims to do, and will do if it is permitted to have its way. When all men live as Jesus set them the example and as he taught them to live, the existing order will be changed and tyranny will have ceased."

While he spoke the anarchist had slowly and as it seemed unconsciously subsided into his chair and Désiré went on:

"If you will come here to-morrow morning I will give you a little pamphlet which will show you more perfectly what I mean. And now," he added, including the rest of the audience in his glance, "I will proceed with what I was about to say."

The sermon was completed amid the most rapt attention, and the closing hymn was given out. As the first words were sung, however, a loud clamor arose upon the bank outside, that of a score of rough voices close by, singing the famous anarchist song *Neither God Nor Master.* The rude and deafening clamor effectually silenced the uncertain voices of those within.

Tréville had found it hard work to sit quiet through the previous interruption; this time he found it impossible. He sprang to his feet, and in spite of Fifine's imploring eyes had taken two or three strides toward the door when he noticed that the singing outside was faltering. It ceased and the hymn was immediately resumed, but Tréville thought he heard expostulatory voices outside. A few minutes later two young men in bicycle costume, with wallets slung over their shoulders, entered the hall.

When the meeting was dismissed, one of the newcomers quickly made his way toward Mrs. Pipotin.

"Réné! she exclaimed.

"You did not expect me? I had not time to write. It is only yesterday that I decided to join my good friend Loic Caroff, in a colporting tour in the Nivernais and the Morvan. Caroff is no end of a good fellow, Bellah, and Breton, like ourselves."

To the surprise of both brother and sister, the young man called Caroff now approached them under the convoy of Nicolas, who eagerly exclaimed,

"An old friend, Bellah! Not that you knew him; but he used to come to the meetings on the *Mystery*, when it made the cruise of the coast of Brittany ten years ago, when I was one of the crew. I recognized him at once, though we never spoke to one another. He was studying for the priesthood then."

"It was on the *Mystery* that I gained my first clear view of truth," said Caroff. "It has been a

long story since; but I finally gave up the idea of being a priest and became a colporter of the Bible Society. I met Clerino at the house of that good Mr. Hatfield, the minister who was on the *Mystery* that year."

"And it was you two who stopped the disturbance outside just now?" asked Bellah.

"It didn't require much courage," laughed her brother Réné. "But what have you done, Nicolas, to incur the priest's displeasure? If I am not much mistaken there was a cassock in the bushes on the bank."

"I have suspected that the priest was at the bottom of the disturbance," observed Mr. Brodart, who had now dismissed the last lingerer. "If so, this is probably not the last of it. But I am sure the worst is over; it is plain that we have gained the sympathies of the people, and when that becomes clear to the curé he will recognize that his game is a losing one and will change his tactics."

CHAPTER IX

FATHER Chardonnet pushed away his manuscript and starting up began to pace the room. The guttering candles not less than the haggard lines upon his face showed that it was late, but he walked back and forth, back and forth, with no thought of going to rest.

"Not in bed yet, Antoine? And long past midnight!"

The schoolmistress stood in the doorway, her feet in slippers and a shawl over her head.

The priest's face softened as it always did at sight of this beloved mother-sister. "It's as late for you as it is for me, Lucie," he said.

"And how could I go to sleep with the light from your window shining across into mine?" she asked, as one would remonstrate with a petted child. Then leading him to his chair and half forcing him to sit down, she added:

"You are taking it too seriously, brother dear. What does it matter after all, if atheists and anarchists who refuse to attend church go their own way to perdition? You have done your part—your conscience is clear."

The priest shook his head. "Not yet," he replied, "not till I have exhausted every means to put a final end to the work of that pestilent boat, here and elsewhere." He glanced at the manu-

script and his sister, following the direction of his eye, took up the paper and read.

It was a vehement appeal to the city authorities to put a stop to the preaching of these emissaries of the enemies of France, these paid spies of Germany and England, who under the cloak of religion were in truth seeking to undermine the nation. Following this was an impassioned call to the people, by all they held holy, to silence these traitors by any means, fair or foul; the foulest would be justifiable in such a case.

The schoolmistress looked sympathetically in her brother's face as she laid down the manuscript, and yet there was a shade of doubt in her voice as she said:

"This is for the papers?"

"Why not?" he asked almost roughly, hurt to the quick by the inflection of doubt. "For as many papers as will publish it—*The Cross*, *The Struggle*, —all of them."

"But *The Struggle* is an anarchist paper, Antoine."

"The more effectual its help against this deadly peril."

Lucie was silent for a moment and when she spoke it was with hesitation. "If you had been in the school to-day, Antoine, you would have seen how much harm all this is doing. The boys have all been on the boat, and being boys they are fascinated with it—"

"The more imperative the need of doing away with it at once," exclaimed the brother, hastily

pushing away his chair and beginning again to pace the room.

"But the means you are using simply make them turbulent and—and worse. They—they do not respect the methods. I find it harder every day to maintain discipline—they even dare to be contemptuous," Lucie faltered, and hid her eyes from the burning gaze of the priest, who had ceased his rapid walk and was looking fixedly into her face.

His expression softened as he recognized the deep pain it gave her to criticize her adored brother. Finally he spoke:

"Lucie, I must do my duty, cost what it may. I must use all means at my disposal in this war against the enemy of souls, who would destroy our Holy Mother Church and our Fatherland. Though I alienate my people, though I incur the displeasure of the authorities, though I risk my position here, even, I must put it down."

The sister had flushed with proud approval of his noble sentiments, but his closing words startled her.

"Risk your position here, Antoine! That can never be!"

Her brother crossed over to the table and handed her a letter. It bore the episcopal seal, and ran to the effect that certain lawless acts recently committed in Montargis having come to the Bishop's ears, and having been traced to the influence of Father Chardonnet, the reverend father was warned

that it would be wise to confine his activity to the service of his own church and people.

Lucie flushed with indignation. "And your answer, Antoine?"

"That," he replied briefly, pointing to the manuscript. "I must," he added to her mute look of protest. "It is my duty. I can do no otherwise." Father Chardonnet had probably never heard of Luther's classic reply, and he certainly was far from any desire to walk in the great reformer's footsteps; but in his young enthusiasm he was as ready to face the results of his own conduct as Luther to confront the devils at Worms.

His sister gazed proudly at him, then with a heavy sigh she laid her two hands on his shoulders, kissed him on both cheeks and said:

"Go to bed now, Antoine, and the saints give you blessed sleep."

"When I have carried this to the printing office," he replied. "It must appear in the morning papers." And Lucie went away with no further remonstrance.

It was ten days since the *Bon Berger* had come to Montargis, and the interest it had awakened had become deeper than that of curiosity. There were many in the city who found on the boat the satisfaction of long felt needs. Every evening the hall was crowded, and not with laboring people only. Professional men, elegantly dressed women, railway employes, small tradesmen, well to do artisans, and peasants from the neighboring hamlets sat side by

side with street sweepers and canal men, washerwomen and servants. It had long since become necessary to hold two services every evening, and during both the bank would be lined with men and women eagerly attentive to such sounds as floated through the open windows, while the roof of the boat would be covered with young men trying to hear through the ventilators. Nicolas and Bellah on their walks before service would often meet groups of men and women running in from their work in the fields, or from distant hamlets, fearing to be too late to find entrance; and if shut out from the first service they would willingly wait upon the bank for the second, though they might have an hour's walk before them after the late dismissal.

Yet with all this eager welcome, the undercurrent of opposition was strongly felt. The anarchist, Gaspard Bonnet, had not accepted Mr. Pipotin's invitation to a private discussion, but he had not again interrupted the service. One evening, however, after the close of the meeting he marched up to the platform with fury on his brow, shouting,

"Sir, I tell you that I am very angry with you for what you have said this evening. I warn you that if you continue to speak in that way I will bring some friends here who will stop your talking altogether."

"But, my friend," asked Pipotin, "what did I say that wounded you so?"

"Sir," Bonnet replied, "you attacked the anarchists."

"Did I?" asked Pipotin, half smiling. "I simply said that if men are allowed in France to preach rebellion and anarchy, we surely should be allowed to preach the Gospel of the God of love and mercy."

The anarchist seemed impressed by this argument, and Nicolas went on: "Come to-morrow morning and let us talk quietly about it. I shall be happy to listen to you, and if you can prove that I have been in the wrong I will freely apologize. We desire to respect all opinions and to receive the same treatment from others."

The result of the next morning's interview was that Bonnet, though he occasionally came to the boat, made no further disturbance. Notwithstanding which it was evident that enmity existed, and that of late it had seemed to grow more and more determined. Small dynamite bombs had been more than once exploded in the hall. Roughs had collected on the bank, hooted, thrown mud and made themselves generally obnoxious. But these demonstrations had been evidently disapproved by the majority of those who came, and on the evening when Father Chardonnet wrote his appeal to the papers half a dozen young men had hastily left the hall, and falling upon the ringleaders had chased them half way to town, caught two or three of them, and inflicted upon them such a drubbing that they cried for mercy and promised better conduct in future.

The champion on this occasion was a stranger in Montargis, but not quite a stranger to Mr. and

Mrs. Pipotin. Robin Arnaud, the young harvester who at Thuvisy, their previous halting place, had been so bewildered on hearing of liberty, equality and fraternity from the lips of teachers of religion, had returned next evening to the boat, eager to learn whether these advocates of liberty, equality and fraternity were anarchists like himself, or whether they were of good old Father Martin's sort. His utter ignorance of the simplest elements of religion had touched the missionaries to the heart. When Bellah had put a New Testament into his hands, he had glanced at it and handed it back, saying:

"I see, Madame, that it speaks of the good God. It is a priest's book and not for me."

She had tried to explain to him that all men need to know about God, but Robin had replied:

"But, Madame, I do; I was at school with the Fathers when I was little. I am all right."

A few days later Nicolas was giving a temperance lecture, and his picture of the ravages the drink habit was making in France, and his appeal to all true patriots to fight this insidious foe, came straight home to the young harvester. He himself was fast falling under the dominion of strong drink; it had more than once cost him the place he so proudly held of leader in the harvest field. As the lecture went on, he felt humiliated at his weakness in this respect. A sudden resolve to mend his fault took possession of him, and he was the first to step forward when Nicolas asked for the signatures of

those who were resolved to give up the use of alcohol.

But poor Robin found his pledge by no means easy to keep, and more than once he had come to the boat under the influence of liquor. Bellah tried to help him, showing him a better strength than his own, but it all seemed Greek to Robin. "You know whom God has given us to be our Saviour from our sins?" Bellah asked him one day when he came to her in despair at having again broken his pledge.

"Why you see, Madame," he answered, "it is so long since I was at school that I have forgotten all that; I do not know what you mean."

But by degrees the light began to dawn upon him; the Gospel of St. Luke which Bellah gave him began at last to be intelligible to him. "I see," he said to her one day, "that every word in this book is important;" and when the *Bon Berger* moved on from Thuvisy, Bellah felt a good hope that Robin had found the true source of strength.

But about a week after their arrival at Montargis, as Bellah sat at work upon the little platform, watching her children at play upon the bank, Robin appeared staggering along the road, evidently under the influence of drink. The sight of Mrs. Pipotin seemed to sober him. He stood at the bridge, hesitating, and when she crossed over to him he exclaimed,

"Oh, Madame, how ashamed I am that you should see me in this state! You know I did resist

while the boat was at Thuvisy and I could see you often, but now that I have been a week without any teaching I have lost my strength. I feel as if I were lost. I cannot save myself." He turned away that she might not see the tears that gushed from his eyes.

It was her golden opportunity to point him to the Saviour. And this time the lesson went home. The demon of drink seemed to take its flight, and thenceforth nothing was too much for Robin Arnaud to do for Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin. He found employment at Montargis, attended the meetings regularly, and during the turbulent days that followed the publication of the priest's manifesto, his loyal allegiance was always a comfort and often an efficient help to the friends to whom he owed so much.

The result of Father Chardonnet's manifesto had not been precisely what he anticipated. The authorities openly disapproved; and the anarchists, who at first had been willing enough to attempt to silence the missionaries, found the deadly hatred with which they were wont to regard all priests reviving with new vigor as they learned to respect the courage and the honesty of those who taught upon the boat. Father Chardonnet's appeal as published in *The Struggle* was as a spark to gunpowder. Led by Gaspard Bonnet, they turned upon the priest. For a time it appeared as if anarchy had indeed begun. Father Chardonnet appealed to the Mayor for a detail of police to guard the church. The request was granted, and at the

same time two policemen were told off in turn, evening by evening, to guard the boat. For though the anarchists had ceased to trouble it, the priest's own adherents, with such lawless characters as they could press into the service, continued their attempts to break up the meetings.

Not, however, for long. The policemen became so much interested in the services that the opportunity to guard the boat was eagerly coveted by the whole force, and the slightest attempt at disturbance was summarily dealt with. Quiet was speedily restored, and the last week of the *Bon Berger's* stay at Montargis was one of very precious ingathering. Mr. and Mrs. Brodart, who had long since gone back to their own church at Sens, returned to help in the delightful but arduous task, which included private conversations from early morning till sunset and three successive meetings in the evening.

On the last day before the boat left Montargis, Mr. Pipotin received a visit from no less a personage than the Mayor, who came to thank him for the efficiency with which he had maintained his right to be heard, and to keep order on his boat.

"I am interested in your teachings," he said. "They seem to give just what is needed at this time. The value of religion as a support to morals and good order is undoubted, but between Roman Catholicism of which we are weary, and free thought which does not satisfy us, we are suspended between heaven and earth. We feel that we need what we do not possess."

Nicolas recommended the reading of the Bible. The Mayor bought one and went away.

"What about the little blind girl?" Mrs. Brodart asked Bellah, as they watched the retreating figure of the Mayor. "I had hoped to see those children at the meeting this afternoon."

"Ah, that is the deepest regret of the last few weeks," replied the younger woman. "I meant to follow them up and try to be of some help. But for a few days I was very busy with those who came to the boat, and when at last I could look them up they were gone. I am particularly anxious about the effect upon that hopeful boy when he finds his prayers unanswered."

Fifine looked earnestly at her friend and was about to speak when the attention of both was attracted by a young woman who was walking toward the boat. Though simply dressed, there was a fine dignity in her walk and manner, which at once lifted her above the commonplace. She came rapidly forward, and accosting Bellah with a courteous gesture which still had in it something of defiance, she asked:

"You are the lady of this boat, Madame?"

"I am," replied Bellah, holding out her hand in greeting.

The young woman did not take the proffered hand. "I am the sister of Father Chardonnet," she said. "May I see you alone, Madame?" And Bellah led the way to her own room.

CHAPTER X

MLLE CHARDONNET declined the chair which Bellah offered her, and somewhat sternly, though with entire courtesy she at once began:

"Do you at all realize what you are doing, Madame, you and your friends? You come into my brother's parish and teach a religion which is not that of this country, the religion of the enemies of France, a religion which stirs people up to resist the authority ordained of God—" she hesitated and Bellah gently interposed, "Are you sure that the people who come to this boat are your brother's parishioners?"

The schoolmistress changed color. "I will not say that they attend church, Madame, for it would not be true. This city is almost entirely given over to atheism and unbelief. But my brother has been here but a short time. He is earnest, he is devout, he is more thoroughly educated than many of the priesthood;" in spite of herself her voice took on an intonation of pride, and Bellah answered sympathetically,

"I am sure of that, Mlle Chardonnet. One can hardly have spent a month in Montargis and not have heard of your beautiful devotion to your brother, and the unusual opportunities of education which you have put within his reach."

Lucie's face softened; "Then can you not under-

stand how cruel it is to him to see those to whom he has devoted his life led into false belief?"

"Dear Mlle Chardonnet," replied Bellah earnestly, "if we believed that our teachings were false, be assured that we would cease to teach. But those who come here have not, as you yourself say, been in the habit of going to church. They have received no religious instruction; they were ignorant of God; many of them hated his very name, many longed for him but knew not what they longed for. And here they have learned that which they perceive is making them better, more moral, more hopeful, more happy. Can you wish that any should miss the consolation and the strength which have come to them thus?

The schoolmistress shook her head.

"False strength, false consolation," she said. "How can an ordained priest of our holy religion, entrusted with the power of the keys, do otherwise than combat these teachings—at whatever cost? Oh, Madame, you do not guess how heavy the cost may be—to him and to me!"

Bellah was moved by the pain in the sister's face. "Believe me," she said, "we wish only good to your brother and to you. If the opposition to our work which he has thought it right to organize results in injury to him, and so in pain to you, believe me, we shall be most sorry. We are going away to-morrow; will not you and he come to the boat this evening and judge for yourselves whether our teachings are indeed as pernicious as you think?"

Again Lucie shook her head. "He would not do that, Madame, and I—I stand with him. But I will confess to you that one of our own people, who has attended some of your meetings, told my brother that he believed they could only do good; and that he could not but admire your husband and his friend who seemed never weary of trying to instruct the people and lead them to God. My brother took this as a new proof that you were attempting to entice men away from the church of their fathers; but now that I have seen you, Madame, I believe that you think you are doing right."

She made a courteous gesture of farewell and went away.

Bellah found Nicolas and Mr. Brodart engaged with a group of prominent citizens who had habitually attended the meetings on the *Bon Berger*. They came, they said, as representing a large number of people of Montargis, who felt that they must have meetings like these on the boat at least once a week. One hundred and fifty francs had already been subscribed, and more would be provided; a wealthy citizen had offered the use of a vacant room at his disposal; could not some one be sent to conduct the meetings?

With heartfelt gratitude, Mr. Brodart consented to come over from Sens once a week; and the joy of the people was most touching when on assembling for service they were told that this, though a farewell meeting, was not the end of their opportunities of religious instruction. Very touching were their

words of farewell. The attendant policemen expressed the warmest thanks for the good they had received. A working man of sixty could hardly command his voice to speak. His eyes filled with tears and he could only ejaculate, "Thank you! thank you! Come again!" Many of the women brought flowers to Bellah, and at the close of the first service a little girl presented Nicolas with a large bouquet, which a leading citizen formally begged him to accept as an expression of the gratitude of the public for the visit of the boat, and their detestation of the opposition it had encountered.

"We sowed in tears," said Nicolas in his reply, "now we are reaping with joy."

Early next morning the *Bon Berger* was taken in tow by a couple of trackers and the early afternoon brought them to the lovely and historic little village of Chatillon, forever memorable as the home of the great and good Admiral Coligny.

At the mooring place stood the stalwart farmer, Tréville, and with him to their great surprise were Bellah's brother, Réné Clerino, and his friend, Loic Caroff, the colporteur.

"You here!" they exclaimed. "We thought you were in the Morvan by this time."

Tréville gave a hearty laugh, and Réné explained, "Such an interesting coincidence, Bellah! We stopped at Vésy to visit Caroff's fiancée and whom did she prove to be but the daughter of your friend, Mr. Tréville. He insisted that we should remain

for a while in this neighborhood, which, as he says, is quite as much in need of the Bible as any other part of France."

"And quite as willing to receive it," said Caroff. "We have wheeled to all the hamlets and villages for thirty miles around, and it is really wonderful how ready people are to buy at least a Gospel."

"And now," interposed Tréville, "our good Caroff will have the pleasure of presenting my daughter Henriette to Mrs. Pipotin. You must all come out to Vésy to-morrow and spend a long day before your work here becomes exacting. I can promise you there will be no such foolishness as you met at Montargis. These young men have well prepared the way for you."

Tréville's invitation was accepted, and after the visitors had departed, Bellah took Anna and Clarice for a walk. She was anxious to visit the grounds and the old tower so hallowed to every French Protestant, and to tell her little daughters as much as they could understand of the heroic life of the martyred Coligny.

The little village, chiefly of one-story cottages with a dormer window giving access to the granary ranged on one side of the cobble-stoned street, was almost deserted, for every one was in the fields gathering the late harvest of potatoes and turnips. The open doors were guarded by nothing more formidable than the fowls that cackled in the refuse heaps. Whatever else the tidy rooms might contain, there was without exception an ancient clock

in the chimney corner, and an old gun against the wall. At the end of the village street nearest the ancient park was the neat inn, *Of the Grace of God*. The hostess stood at the open door and cheerily answered Bellah's questions as to whether the grounds were open to the public.

"To be sure they are; but not many visit them now-a-days. No, the family is not named Coligny—that was long ago, before the present chateau was built; but in my grandfather's time they brought the remains of the Admiral here and buried them up by the old tower. Madame can visit the place if she will; but it is a long walk for the little ones. Will they not come in and refresh themselves with sugared water before they begin?"

Bellah accepted the courtesy, and they passed through the clean kitchen, where the shining surface of the enormous range was reflected from innumerable bright copper saucepans of all shapes and sizes, ranged upon the walls. In the brick floored dining-room a long narrow table bore half a dozen great pots of the exquisite faience of the district, holding palms and a jasmine in full bloom. At one end of the table sat a priest with a man and two children, all with glasses of thin wine before them. They rose when Bellah entered, bowed courteously and resumed their seats.

The hostess bustled in with three glasses of sugared water, and as she set them on the table she said,

"Madame is the lady of that strange berrichon, is it not so?"

"How did you know?" asked Bellah in surprise. "We reached here only an hour ago."

"Ah, but we have been expecting Madame. M. Tréville, who stops here to refresh himself when he goes to the railway, has told us about your boat, and Madame's brother and his friend have lodged here several nights. Only yesterday I bought a little book from the brother of Madame. It contains some most interesting stories. Has Madame seen it?"

She was carefully unfolding from several enveloping handkerchiefs a small red-covered New Testament, and after showing it to Bellah she carried it to the other end of the table and proudly exhibited it to the priest and his companions. The priest looked at the title page, and turning to Bellah he asked somewhat severely though with entire courtesy:

"How is it, Madame, that you and your friends, being Protestant, come among Roman Catholics to circulate your books?"

Bellah so fully recognized the right of a parish priest to ask such a question that it was with much sympathy that she answered:

"Because, M. l'abbé, it seems to us that the Bible, and especially the New Testament, gives that help to right living and right thinking that we all need. We have found it to rescue so many people from despair, so many others from sin, that we long to see a copy in everyone's hands. Yet we do not wish to interfere with your work among your

own people. If we could believe that you would see that every family in your parish was put in possession of a New Testament, we should gladly leave the work to you. But we do long to see the light of the Gospel shining upon the multitudes in France who know nothing of the Word of God."

The priest appeared impressed and replied, "I acknowledge that you are right and we are wrong when we refuse to circulate such books. I fancy the Church fears they may be wrongly interpreted. It is a great pity we have no French version supported by the Church of Rome. There is no doubt that saints fill too much place in our Church, and Jesus Christ not enough. Things being as they are, I heartily welcome sincere Christians, whatever be the Church to which they belong. All those who love God and Jesus Christ ought to walk hand in hand. My Church objects to your books and so I cannot circulate them, but I am glad you should do so."

Bellah was greatly touched by the frank catholicity of the priest's remark, and she cordially invited him to come to the meeting that evening and ascertain for himself whether the teachings there were such as he could approve. He promised to do so, and Bellah and her children went away.

Applying at the lodge for permission to walk through the grounds to the ruins of the old château in which Coligny was born, she again found an interested welcome. The colporteurs had been there, and the lodge-keeper proudly showed her, in the

place of honor beside the clock, a large illustrated Bible. Leaving the lodge in charge of her old mother, the good woman volunteered her services to show the visitors through the modern château and the gardens. The first part of the offer Bellah declined, but she and the children found the gardens full of interest. They lay just where they had been in Coligny's time, on high terraces on the south side of a steep hill which commanded a view of the smiling valley of the Loing for twenty miles —a park-like district, with many beautiful country seats on either side of the winding river. Most interesting of all was the long stairway of broad stone steps reaching through the well-preserved fortifications from the foot of the hill to the upper plateau, and the children listened in wide-eyed interest while the lodge-keeper, with many promptings from an old gardener, told them the story of the great Condé defeated by Marshall Turenne at Bleneau, twenty miles down the valley, spurring his horse along the white road that they could see by the riverside, hotly pursued by the enemy, and how the good steed carried him up these same steps and into the great hall at the top, while the gates of the fortifications were shut in the very faces of the pursuing enemy. It was a thrilling story, and the children chattered eagerly about it as the old gardener led them up the steps and through the dark woods to the ruined tower on the hill top. Bellah let them wander about the ruins hand in hand with the old man, while she knelt beside the

little fenced-in plot where the simple headstone tells the pathetic story of the vicissitudes of the sacred relics of the noble Admiral Coligny from the sacrilegious treatment of those three awful days of St. Bartholomew, till after nearly three hundred years they were brought to rest beneath the tower of his birth. The story was too pitiful to tell the children, but Bellah was glad to kneel here alone, and thank God for the glorious history of Protestantism in France, and dedicate herself anew, and offer her children, to the cause of Christ in this land of Christian heroes and martyrs.

She rose from her knees as the children, still gaily chattering, came to find her. They returned to the boat by way of the little river which here goes babbling over rocks, beneath ancient trees. There were women washing clothes on the bank, and with all of them they had a cheery word. As they reached the point where the canal joins the river, a donkey came in sight towing a berrichon. Behind it walked a man whom Bellah did not know, but as the berrichon drew nearer a boy leaped ashore with a shout of glad surprise, and then she saw on the deck of the boat the little blind girl sitting on her mother's knee, and recognized that it was George who was running to meet her.

CHAPTER IX

"You here, my boy!" exclaimed Bellah, with genuine pleasure. The eager delight in George's face would have awakened it even if she had not already been deeply interested in the boy.

Jean Poêle looked gratified, and signifying to the willing Georgette that a halt was desired, he deftly brought the berrichon close along the tow-path and invited Bellah to step aboard. "We are going toward your boat?" he asked.

Bellah assented and with a word of thanks took George's hand and stepped upon the broad gunwale, while Jean set the two little girls on board. Anna and Clarice at once took possession of Ernestine. Almost from their birth they had lived among strangers whom they knew to be objects of their parents' deepest interest. It was impossible that they should be self-conscious or awkward with other children, and in less than five minutes the three little girls were sitting on two stools in a corner of the compartment, Ernestine on Anna's lap, and chattering as merrily as so many sparrows, and far more harmoniously.

George meanwhile had seated himself on the gunwale close to the chair which he had brought for Mrs. Pipotin, his eyes fixed on her face. He knew that she would talk with him by and bye, though it was to his mother that she was now speaking.

Or rather it was his mother who was speaking. Thérèse, naturally voluble and much alone, unable to talk and with leisure to brood on her troubles, rejoiced in the opportunity to pour out her soul into an ear that she instinctively felt to be sympathetic. She forgot that she had told the whole story to this kindly listener, a month ago.

And for that matter, had not the events of that month made the old story a new one? For Jean had taken on a cargo before he was fit to work—how could he do otherwise with not a sou and the little one starving? and he had injured himself so much that he was indeed quite lame, as the captain-lady could see, and being lame and suffering, of course his temper was something fairly impossible, not to say that he was drinking worse than ever, and it was all she could do, and more, sometimes, to get four sous for bread. "And the little one growing thinner every day, as Madame plainly sees."

Bellah had indeed seen, and had been shocked to see that little Ernestine looked wan and hunger-pinched, and she longed to come to the relief of this truly afflicted family. Yet how? The mission, of course, had no funds for such uses, but that did not signify, for Mrs. Pipotin, the daughter of a strolling player, was a woman of ample wealth, through an inheritance from a great-uncle who had made a fortune in America. The question was not of money but of method How could she give them any effective and permanent help? As to the small

detail of seeing that those children had enough to eat for some time to come, she had tact and discretion enough for that.

"I wish your husband were able to come to the boat when my husband is talking about the dangers of alcohol, and the benefits of temperance," she said, when at last Thérèse paused a moment to consider from what new starting point to begin a repetition of her story.

Thérèse shook her head. "We cannot stop and he would not go to the boat," she answered. "Father Chardonnet told him you were dangerous, and Father Chardonnet is the only one who helped us in our trouble, and so—"

"But your husband seemed glad to see us just now and invited us on board very kindly."

Thérèse's face softened as she looked at her guest. "Ah, how could he help that, when he saw *you*, Madame? she said.

"Then you won't mind if I ask him to make his night halt near enough to Chatillon to come to the boat this evening?"

"He's likely enough to stop," replied the wife with a heavy sigh. "The sun is setting and the cabaret of the Grace of God is a good one."

"Let's manage that he shall come to us, instead of to the cabaret," said Bellah encouragingly. "I think it can be done. There is our boat just ahead, and the village is not far off. Let George run up and buy what you need," she opened her purse, being careful to select, not a bank note but a num-

ber of small silver pieces, "and do you give your husband the very best supper that you ever cooked, one that he won't have finished before eight o'clock. I'll invite him to come to the boat this evening. Just tell George what to get, and let him run away quick."

Thérèse caught her breath and hesitated. "I know," exclaimed George, "I know what he likes. I'll be back soon, mother, never fear," and with a long leap he reached the shore and sped away, the money in his hand. After all, he had not been able to speak to the captain-lady; but he felt sure that his time would come.

His father shouted roughly after him, but Bellah stood up and called out, "I sent him, Mr. Poêle, it is an errand for me," and Jean doffed his cap in instinctive courtesy.

"We should get off here," Bellah went on; "will you stop the boat?" And as he came to help her off, she proffered her invitation.

He would have refused gruffly, but somehow he could not. Her pleasant way, the genuine interest she had shown in his family, had touched him. He had been watching her all the time, looking back over his shoulder, he had seen his little blind daughter with her children's arms about her. And now she was inviting him to her boat! Oh, yes, Father Chardonnet would surely say that it was only a trap. No matter, he would see for himself if a woman, with a face like that, and a voice so kind could set traps for a man that had done her no

harm, or at least—. Well, no harm had been done. Yes, he would go.

The whole family were at the boat that evening, with very nearly the entire population of Chatillon, including the hostess of the inn, and the lodge keeper and gardener from the park. A temperance lecture never comes amiss among the French peasantry, and though he might not otherwise have taken this for his opening subject, Mr. Pipotin felt justified in doing so on this occasion. He had charts and illustrations, and his graphic picture of the ills of intemperance made a deep impression on others besides Jean Poêle. Still, the tracker did not accept the invitation to sign one of the two pledges proffered to the audience, that of the Blue Cross Society of total abstinence, or that of the Legrain Society of abstinence from alcoholic liquors. He sat still when three or four men and one woman went up and signed, and when afterward Mr. Pipotin came and spoke to him, he replied:

"It is easy for you, sir, to talk of abstinence, for you have enough of everything. But when a glass takes the place of the food and the fire and the comfortable clothes that you have not got, and makes you forget that every bone is aching from overwork, would you sign that paper then?"

Nicolas looked at him a moment without speaking, but with an expression that was certainly not reproof. Then pointing to Thérèse and Ernestine, he asked simply, "And it does all that for them, too!"

The man changed color beneath his tan. "They don't always look like that," he said apologetically, "I have been ill and could not work."

"I know," said Nicolas. "You must have fallen sadly in arrears in the matter of comforts. And don't you think that a little abstinence would help you to get on your feet again? You might sign for a month—by way of testing the matter."

Jean considered, then marched up the aisle and set his mark under the name which Nicolas wrote for him under the Legrain pledge. "The other—I'm afraid that would be too much for me," he said.

"I am glad you realize the importance of keeping your pledge," the evangelist answered. "But remember, you may have the help of God; and nothing is too hard for him."

The temperance lecture had been a Gospel sermon as well, and Bellah in conversation with several women had tried to press the subject home. Thérèse seemed particularly unable to understand, and when Bellah spoke of the forgiveness of sins she replied with an air of perplexity,

"But, Madame, I do not need to be forgiven. I do no wrong, I work hard and make the most of all I get—otherwise things would be worse with us than they are now."

"And you never do wrong?"

"No, Madame, I have more sense. I do not drink, I do not steal—" she stopped as she saw George's eyes fixed upon her.

"And when Ernestine grows up," asked Bellah,

"if she does not love you, does not obey you, never cares whether you love her or not, will you say she is a good daughter, because she does not drink or steal?"

"Ah, no, Madame, but that is different. I love my little girl, I work for her, I suffer for her, go hungry that she may eat, she would be ungrateful if she cared nothing for me."

"And so God loves you," urged Bellah, "he longs for your love, he gave his Son to suffer and even to die for you; will you not love him? He begs for your love."

"No, Madame," replied Thérèse firmly, "you are mistaken. He does not love me, he has let me suffer too much."

She moved to join her husband who was coming down the aisle. The old gardener was waiting to speak to Bellah, and there was nothing for it but to let her go.

When the last visitor had left the boat, Bellah suddenly remembered that she had barely spoken to George. He had stood close beside her while she talked with his mother, then suddenly he had disappeared. A little troubled about this, she went over the foot-bridge and looked up and down. In a moment she heard a step and George was there.

"Come in, dear boy," she said kindly. "I am glad you did not go away without a word."

George did not move to follow her. "Please wait," he exclaimed. "There was more than enough. I want to give you these," and he ex-

tended his open hand. The glitter of silver was visible in the strong stern-light of the boat.

"They are for your mother, George," said Bellah kindly. "I meant to give you more than enough for this evening."

Still George hesitated. "Would you—would you," he at last stammered, "would you give us this if you knew—if you knew—that I—stole?" The last word was almost inaudible. Then he hastily caught himself up. "Not my mother, you know—only me."

"Dear boy," said Bellah, drawing him toward a seat, and this time he did not resist, "I believe that you were much tempted." She stopped and then began afresh.

"Do you think I was sorry for you when I learned that you had not enough to eat?"

"Oh, yes, captain-lady, I know you were."

"I gave you the money, partly at least, because I was sorry?"

"Yes, I know you did!"

"Can you believe that I am much more sorry that you should do wrong than that you should be hungry? And that I should be all the more anxious to be kind to you?"

"Is that the way?" asked George amazed.

"Yes, that is the way," said Bellah earnestly. "And that is the way that God loves us, George. It was because we were doing wrong that he sent his Son, the Lord Jesus, to this world. He wants us to be good so much that he could do even that."

George seemed like one bewildered. He was so long silent that Bellah was about to speak again when he said in a low tone:

"I thought he was mad at me. He didn't make Ernestine see, though I asked him many times. I couldn't think why he didn't, for I knew he was kind—and he could. And then I thought that it might be the stealing. I hadn't thought there was any harm, for the people had so many things to eat and we had nothing, and they never knew."

"Then what made you think he was displeased?" asked Bellah.

"Because he didn't make Ernestine see; and because he is so good—and he can. Somehow when I thought about him, it seemed as if he wouldn't like me to take things. So then I knew I mustn't ask him any more to make Ernestine see; for it would do no good if she starved to death."

His voice broke and he turned half away. Bellah's eyes, too, were full of tears, and her voice was unsteady as she said:

"You need never stop praying because you have done wrong, dear boy. The thing is to stop doing wrong. He will forgive every wrong you are sorry for, and help you to do right."

George shook his head. "I can't stop stealing when Ernestine cries for something to eat," he said.

"Oh, how hard, how hard it is," thought the captain-lady, at her wits' end for the right word. Then the inspiration came.

"But he has helped you, George, already. Had your mother any money this afternoon?" George shook his head.

"Or any food?"

Again he shook his head.

"And what were you going to do for Ernestine's supper to-night?"

The boy's head drooped. "Look for a potato field," he whispered.

"And did you?"

He raised his head, almost with a shout. "No, for *you* came," he cried. Then in an awed whisper, "Did *he* send you?"

"I believe he did," said Bellah solemnly. "And I think he has told me to give you this." She took a five franc piece from her purse. "See here, George, your father has taken the pledge for a month. He will get his wages at the end of the line, will he not? Yes, and he will not spend them for drink—not if your mother gives him good food. This much you *know* that Jesus is doing for you. And if after that hard days come, if work is slack, or your father begins to drink too much, still will you not trust him to help you to do right? Pray to him for strength, dear boy, and pray that you may not be tempted above what you are able to bear."

"And may I pray again for Ernestine to see?" he asked.

"Yes, pray, pray for everything, dear boy, for he loves to have you pray. But remember what

he wants first of all is to have you good. And he wants you to trust him always. If he does not answer your prayer soon, still pray, and still trust. He knows what is best for you and for Ernestine, too."

"And he always does what is best?" asked the boy, eagerly.

"Always!"

"Then he will make her see, I know he will, for that is best for her. And I will never stop praying till he does! Good-night, captain-lady." And with a bound the boy was gone.

CHAPTER XII

It was a lovely morning in early October when the boat party set out for Tréville's farm, about three miles away, at Vésy. A donkey cart had been sent for two little girls, and their uncle Réné undertook to drive them, while Loic Caroff, walking with Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin, embraced the opportunity to commend his Henriette to Bellah's interest.

"You will like her, I am sure," he said, "and I think you can help her. She is the sweetest girl in the world, but she cares little about religion now. But that is in part the result of circumstances. Her father being almost the only Protestant in this region, and her step-mother a Catholic, of course her religious education has been much neglected."

"Where was she educated?" asked Bellah.

"She was two years in a convent school. While there she became much disturbed about her religious state. She tried penitences and practices of all sorts, but they brought her no peace. She even thought of taking the veil, but to this her father would not consent. After she left the convent her religious interest died away. But now she is thinking more of these things, and I feel sure you could help her, Mrs. Pipotin."

Bellah expressed her interest and the three

walked on in silence, drinking in the beauty of the world. All around them spread undulating fields, richly brown with the upturned earth of the potato harvest; in green hollows here and there nestled tiny hamlets with smoky cream walls and grey roofs; against the vivid sky stood autumn forests in every shade of burnished copper and glittering gold; the old Coligny tower crowned the heights; the river winding and curving between its wooded banks broadened out here and there into a heaven-blue reach, with tiny islets on its bosom; the voices of peasants at their work, the calls of birds overhead making ready for their southward flight, the occasional laughter of the children far ahead upon the road, brought sound to mingle with sight in the joy of being alive in such a world.

At a wayside cross they found the donkey cart and its passengers awaiting them. Beyond lay well-tended market gardens, and on the farther side a small hamlet and a church.

"That is Vésy," said Caroff. "Mr. Tréville's farmstead is just beyond the church."

A woman drawing water in a pitcher from the village well before the church looked at them with interest, then lifted up her voice and shouted, "Henriette, Henriette, here are the folks from the boat."

A young woman came running from under the tall plantains that enclosed the farmstead, like a square green island in a sea of brown. With a blushing smile at Caroff, she passed quickly to

Bellah. "You are Mrs. Pipotin," she said. "We are all so glad that you could come. My parents and brothers are in the fields, but they will soon come in to luncheon." And she led the way across the farmyard into the large well-furnished kitchen.

Bellah was pleased with the girl's frank and unembarrassed simplicity and with her pretty air of deference to her fiancé, but there was little time for conversation before the rest of the family came in, Tréville in his shirt sleeves, full of hospitable delight, Mrs. Tréville lingering in some outer precinct till she had made a bit of toilet, and the brothers, two strapping youths who bade fair to rival their father in size, awkwardly showing their pleasure with broad and wordless smiles. Two stout servant wenches were bustling about the range, and in a few moments luncheon was served at a table in the front end of the great room.

The conversation turned on the boat. "This hamlet is as wide awake as Chatillon itself," said Tréville. "We shall be twenty strong, going over there to-night, and that will include nearly all the able-bodied among us. We are all reading the Gospels since these young men came among us, and as I brought one of your hymn books from Montargis, Henriette has been teaching her brothers and the maids to sing."

A quick glance passed between Caroff and Bellah, before she turned with a pleased smile to the young girl, who had risen to give the finishing

touches to a *soufflé*, while the maids exchanged the plates upon the table.

"Tell them about the ambulance," suggested the elder son, half sheepishly.

"You will be interested in that," said Tréville. "A few days ago who should encamp upon the green before the church but our friend the enemy, Bonnet the anarchist, with his wife and two children. It seems that he was more impressed than you knew with what he heard upon the boat. After his last conversation with you, a friend said to him, 'Bonnet, if we anarchists had men as devoted as the disciples of that man Jesus Christ, they would go through France, preach our gospel of revolution to workpeople, and ten years after, the whole nation would be converted. Socialism and the overthrow of society would be accomplished. But the disciples of Christ have their motto, 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' while ours is 'Charity begins and ends at home;' with such a principle we cannot succeed.' 'But,' shouted Bonnet, 'that is not my principle, and I will prove it.'"

"The next day he bought an old omnibus, an old horse, put his wife and children in the omnibus, gave up his newspaper and his home. He has resolved to go throughout the whole of France, lecturing from place to place and selling revolutionary pamphlets."

"That is very striking," said Nicolas, musingly. "What a power for good that man will be when he becomes converted to the true Gospel."

"You think he will?" asked Tréville doubtfully.

"He is too much in earnest, too willing to deny himself for the cause, not to come sooner or later to the light," replied the evangelist. And luncheon being over, the party rose from table to make the tour of the farm before speeding their guests on their return journey.

That evening a group of hardy, healthy looking peasants, broad-shouldered, round-faced, bareheaded and collarless, came to the boat under the escort of Tréville and his daughter. They were noisy and blustering when they arrived, but alert and eager listeners as soon as the service began. Their attendance never flagged during the three weeks' stay of the boat, and before the close of the period Tréville informed the Pipotins that at the request of his neighbors and employes he had promised to hold a Bible reading and singing service every Sunday afternoon in his great kitchen.

"It will at least keep the young fellows from walking in to Chatillon to the cabaret, with 'a fat morning' of lazy sleep on Monday; and it will wake the maids up a bit. Sunday is a dull day for the women folk on a farm."

It had not needed Caroff's commendation of his betrothed to awaken Bellah's interest in the kindly natured girl; it was not many days before they were on friendly terms, and Bellah was not surprised when one Thursday afternoon Henriette came to help her with the children's meeting, and announced her intention of staying to supper on

the boat and walking home with her village party in the evening. She divined that the girl desired to talk with her alone, and after the service sent her children to play on the bank and invited Henriette to her own room, the late afternoon being somewhat chilly for sitting out of doors.

Henriette at once began. "Loic told me, Mme Pipotin, that you would like to help me to be a better woman."

"Surely," replied Bellah, smiling, "but in what respect does Caroff see room in you for improvement?"

Henriette smiled too, but went on earnestly. "You know how good he is, Madame, how he spends his life trying to make others good; I am not fit to be his wife."

"It is, indeed, a noble thing to be a good man's wife, and it is a happy thing when we women realize the importance of our part in the success of those who live to make others good. You are in thorough sympathy with Caroff's work, Henriette?"

"Yes, now I am; though once I wished that he would be a farmer and not need to be absent from me most of the time. But, Madame, my mother was a saint, so my father says—my own mother, I mean. And her mother was also a saint, my father says. They were Protestants, as he is; but I do not remember them, and I had never seen any Protestants except my father until I met Loic. I wish I could be a saint like my mother and grand-

mother, then I should be more fit to be Loic's wife."

"You have a Bible?" asked Bellah.

"My father has one—my mother used to read it to him; but I have not read it much. I never seemed to find anything to help me in it."

Bellah took a Gospel of St. John from her table and turning to the third chapter read, "God so loved the world." As simply as she knew how she explained that to know that God loves us, and to know the wonderful proof of his love in the gift of his beloved Son, is the secret of being "better" as Henriette had said. The girl listened eagerly and then, somewhat to Bellah's surprise, burst into tears.

"Oh, how wicked I am, how wicked," she sobbed. "I have read that verse before Madame, more than once, and it never meant anything at all to me. To think that God should give his Son, and I not care!"

"But you care now, Henriette. You believe now that God loves you?"

"Oh yes, yes!"

"And that Jesus wants you to believe in him?"

"Me! who have been so hard-hearted to him? Oh, Mrs. Pipotin, I can't think he wants me after all the past!"

"It says 'whosoever,' you know," said Bellah gently.

Henriette checked her sobs, and taking the little Gospel from her friend's hand read the verse over and over.

"Yes, Madame; I see; it means even me."

"And you believe in his love, that he died for you, that he sends his Holy Spirit to make you over new? That because Christ died for you, you have life in him?"

"Oh, yes, yes!"

"Then let us praise him for his gift to you," said Bellah, softly, and they knelt together.

"Now you pray," Bellah whispered, after she had poured out the gratitude of her heart, and amid her tears Henriette prayed:

"God be pitiful to me a sinner. I have been very wicked, do make me a"—a sob interrupted her—"a Christian, a true Christian; I do so want to be your child. Make me your child for Jesus' sake."

"This will be glad news for Mr. Caroff," said Bellah, when at last they were summoned to supper. "You will write him all about it, Henriette?" And the girl assented with a grateful pressure of her friend's hand.

Caroff had said good-bye to his fiancé on the evening after the visit to the farm, and the next morning he and his friend Réné had wheeled away on their colporting tour, going across country to Clamecy, whence they proposed to strike into that interesting but little known district, the Morvan.

Bellah had eagerly looked out for the Jolie Charbonnière on the morning after the visit of the Poêle family to the boat, but it had started on its way before daylight. As the busy weeks slipped

by she began to watch for its return. Briare was only a few days' journey from Chatillon for such a boat, and into the broad waters of the Loire the berrichon would not venture. But when the stay at Chatillon drew toward its close with no sign of the Poêles or their boat, she began to be anxious. Had some accident happened to them? Had Jean failed to keep his pledge, with results more disastrous than usually attended such a failure? She thought of George battling against the temptation to steal that Ernestine might not cry with hunger; praying day after day that his little sister might receive her sight; and with an unutterable yearning of heart she joined her prayers to his that he might be kept steadfast and true in the midst of whatever temptation.

If she could have known how cruel the temptation was her prayers could hardly have been more earnest, but her heart would have been more sad. For a time all had gone well with the Poêles. Jean had kept his pledge, the five franc piece which Bellah had given George smoothing the way by the good food it provided. At Briare he had discharged his cargo, received his pay and taken on a load of charcoal for a small manufacturing village only two days' journey north.

But arrived at Villevallais, and the charcoal discharged, no better engagement presented itself than the hope of a cargo of pottery a couple of weeks later. And now the temptation of idleness came to strengthen the craving which had constantly been

importunate, notwithstanding Thérèse's rather left-handed efforts with her little charcoal furnace. For three days Jean manfully turned his back upon the cabaret; then one evening "it was stronger than he," and he slipped away while Thérèse and George were on the farther side of the boat fishing for gudgeons for supper.

At the cabaret he found a great excitement. An old omnibus was drawn up on one side of the door, and from the step a man was talking with fiery eloquence to a throng of people who filled the little *Place* to overflowing.

"Neither God nor master!" were the first words that reached Jean's ears. "Why are you poor while others roll in wealth? Why must you look into your children's faces and see hunger staring at you out of their eyes, while other children, no better than yours, deserving nothing more of society, roll past you in gilded carriages, well fed, pampered, insolent. I tell you the religion of the rich, the religion of the priests, is all a plot to keep you in subjection. There is no God! Throw off your childish fears! What is the hereafter that it should prevent your living to-day? To-morrow we die! Well, then, since that is the end let us live now. There is no God; therefore there need be no master. You are your own masters if you will but think so, and all—all—" he waved his hand comprehensively over the town—"all is yours; you have but to use the strength of your arms and take!"

A roar of applause filled up the interval spent by the perspiring orator in mopping his face and taking breath. Jean listened transfixed as he resumed, calling on honest men to save the country by overturning the government and dividing its wealth among those who needed and deserved it. The impassioned eloquence went to Jean's brain like wine, and as the speaker at last paused from sheer exhaustion, and the crowd broke up, he followed those who entered the alehouse, and before he was well aware had accepted a proffered glass. After that, pledge, children, wife, all were forgotten.

George and his mother, waiting anxiously for Jean's return, saw the short twilight fade into night and the few lights of the village shine out. Ernestine fell asleep supperless in her mother's arms, and neither of the others thought of the good food that was going to waste at their side. Once George had suggested that he should go to seek his father, but just then a loud uproar arose and his mother caught his hand and drew him closer to her. One by one the village lights went out, and as Thérèse at last rose wearily to carry Ernestine to bed, bidding George also seek his couch beside Georgette, another uproar arose in the village, this time with shrieks and cries for help. Trembling at they knew not what, mother and son crouched close against the gunwale of the boat, until the frosty air of the October night warned them to seek shelter.

Wearied out George slept heavily, and it was

broad day when his mother waked him. White with fear she stood at the entrance of the hut, a police officer beside her.

"Take care of Ernestine, George. Give her her breakfast when she awakes. Your father has been arrested for rioting and they have sent for me."

CHAPTER XIII

RÉNÉ CLERINO and Loic Caroff were breakfasting in the beautiful vaulted refectory, once the ancient Bethlehem Church, now a part of the hotel at Clamecy, when a man in clerical dress came in. Both young men uttered an exclamation of pleasure. "Mr. Hadfield! You here!"

They had known him long ago in the days when the *Mystery* was cruising on the coast of Brittany. It was Mr. Hadfield who had first sowed the seeds of an enlightened faith in the heart of the young student for the priesthood, and had won the boy Réné's gratitude by his kindness to his two sisters. Since then they had come to know each other well, for Mr. Hadfield was in charge of an important Mission Hall in Paris.

"After you two left Paris," he was saying, as he took his coffee, "the Committee decided to ascertain just how much survived of the work done in Clamecy and the neighboring villages a year or two ago. So I came hither and found so much that was hopeful that it has been decided to send the *Bon Berger* to winter here, and carry on a four months' campaign. If you should return this way a month hence, Réné, you will find your sister and her family here."

"That I cannot do," replied Réné. "A week or two in the Morvan, and I must return to Paris

by train, probably from Avallon, to take my elder sister south. You have seen Herriedd lately, Mr. Hadfield. Do you find her any less strong than last year?"

A shade crossed the good man's face. "Her delicate frame needs the sunshine and soft air of the South," he said, "but her spirit was never so strong as now, her faith never more serene, her hope—nay her certainty—more bright."

"You know," said Réné in a low voice, "that she has always been everything to me. More than the mother whom I cannot remember, more than sister ever was, I sometimes think. And though I know that she has never asked for a happier lot than one of constant self-sacrifice and service, yet Mr. Hadfield I cannot but feel with bitterness that a happier lot might easily have been hers, and a long life instead of—" he broke off abruptly.

Caroff, who had finished his breakfast and was examining the antique decorations of the vaulted chamber, now judging by the silence that the conversation was at an end, suggested that it was time to go, and with adieus to Mr. Hadfield they crossed the bridge that spans the three waterways, the Yonne, its picturesque tributary, the Beuvron, and the storied Nivernais canal, all crowded with rafts and canal boats, and took the broadly sweeping road that leads up into the Morvan.

It is a wild, hilly country, the highest land in France, with here and there a noble mountain summit. Unvisited by tourists because no railroad has

as yet penetrated its recesses, it has retained much of the interest of earlier days in its picturesque villages, towns of rare architectural beauty and mediæval associations, and especially in its primitive customs and modes of thought. Beautiful streams, the head-waters of the Seine, the Loire and the Rhone, wind among its forest and heather clad hills; here and there is a noble old château, and some of the most interesting church architecture in Europe is found in the little towns perched upon hill crests or nestled in the valleys. The people seem to be almost a race apart, isolated, superstitious, uneducated, living their quiet lives with little intercourse with the outside world, industrious but not hard-working, honest but not in haste to grow rich, wounded by a proffered fee, sensitive to the slightest assumption of superiority, yet kindly and happy in being kind. Here the young men spent the golden St. Martin's summer. Often they would leave their wheels in care of some friendly cottager, and climb on foot the steep hillsides, where sheep were feeding among the heather, guarded by a sheperdess spinning wool on a distaff, and penetrate the forests where the charcoal burners were at work. Shepherdess and charcoal burners alike received with pleasure the tracts they had to give, though not infrequently the pictured first page was all that spoke to them. But they would listen with interest to the story their visitors had to tell, sometimes pondering it in silence, sometimes making shrewd remarks or asking intelligent

questions, and always treasuring up the tract for child or neighbor to read to them when winter snows drove them back to their village homes.

Thus the colporteurs followed up the baby Yonne to ancient Corbigny, where a thousand years ago the Kings of France renewed their power to heal the King's evil, and on to Château Chinon with its ancient ruins. Then striking across the sterile table lands and dense forests of the watershed, they reached the romantic valley of the Cure with its ravines and waterfalls, its quaint old villages and singular relics of a forgotten time. So they made their way through a region of still undescribed beauty, to that queen of ancient hill towns, Vezelay, where St. Bernard preached the second crusade, and Cœur de Lion took the cross.

In the steep streets of the sleepy city they distributed tracts to the few old men and children whom they found abroad, and leaving their wheels at the cathedral door they spent an hour in the uniquely beautiful sanctuary. Then climbing the tower they stood for a long time silently surveying the wide panorama that spreads out unobstructed to the far horizon. As they turned to go down, they heard steps ascending the narrow stair, and waited.

Presently a man stepped out upon the tower-top. He was of middle age, slightly grizzled about the temples, of a severe countenance and martinet air. The young men had looked at him only casually, and were preparing to descend, when suddenly the

stranger's countenance changed, softened, became almost illumined. He stepped forward with outstretched hand, and exclaimed, "Réné!"

"Master!" exclaimed Réné; "you here!"

"Here, surely," said the elder man, with a sudden change from gladness to mournfulness; "but hardly 'master' to you now, Réné. You have gone far beyond me, with your university training, and could teach me, no doubt."

Réné, too, changed countenance while the other spoke, and the joyful impulse of his first greeting became almost cold as he politely disclaimed the last remark, and then presented the newcomer to Caroff as Mr. Touillier. Neither seemed to find another word to say, and it was Caroff's frank ignorance of anything amiss, and his courteous platitudes, that bridged over the next awkward five minutes.

Mr. Touillier first recovered his self-possession. "You are here for the first time?" he asked. "It is a wonderful church, and an interesting city. I often wheel up here on a Saturday from Avallon, where I am head-master. Avallon is more beautiful than Vezelay, but it has not the wide distances of this tower-top; and there are times when one must look afar off, or—I—" he hesitated, again confused.

"We are going to Avallon," said Caroff; "this is the last day of an interesting fortnight in these hills, and we must both get back to the prosaic world before winter sets in. You know the road

well; it would perhaps be pleasant to you if we should go in company."

Touillier looked gratified, but turned inquiringly to Réné. Softened by the contrast between the hesitating manner of to-day and the self-assurance which had won his boyish admiration ten years before, the young man's voice had no note of hesitation as he said:

"Yes; let us join you, Mr. Touillier. We can wait below till you are ready."

Still, the awkwardness which both of them felt did not wear off until they had gone several miles on their way. The talk had been first of the scenery, then of the customs of the country, and finally of education; and Réné, remembering the "Master's" bitter opposition to religion in former days, was surprised to hear him acquiesce in Caroff's opinion that the rapid increase in child crime in France was due to the absence of religious education. Not long after, as they were walking up a long hill, Caroff went on somewhat in advance, and was for a few minutes lost to view around a turn in the road. At once Mr. Touillier turned to Réné, and asked—almost humbly—

"Are you willing to tell me how your sister is, Réné?"

"Herriedd, do you mean?" asked the young man, stiffened again by the question. "I suppose the doctor would say that she is dying. I am going to take her South next week."

He spoke coldly, almost brutally, but when he

saw his companion turn white and stagger toward the nearest bank, his strength broke down. "I—I do not give her up yet," he faltered.

Touillier was gasping, as if in pain. Then he gathered himself together and walked on—in silence for a few moments; then he spoke.

"I loved her, Réné."

"Did you?" asked Réné again coldly. "I was only a boy then, but I thought it was yourself you loved."

Touillier winced. "And you were right, so far. But I also loved her—as truly as such as I could love. And in all these years, Réné," his voice softened, "I have learned what it is to love a woman like Herriedd."

Réné's coldness was not proof against the tone in his old friend's voice. "Then what parted you?" he asked. "I am sure that Herriedd loved you. I believe—" he added as a sudden light broke upon him, "I believe she loves you yet."

Touillier took off his hat and looked upward. "I believe she does," he said solemnly, as if he were uttering a prayer.

For a moment they walked on in silence; then Touillier spoke again.

"You have a right to know, Réné. It was not my selfishness that parted us; she would have accepted that; not my absurd ambition which has brought me at forty-two no farther than I was at thirty—the mere head-master of a communal school. She would not have minded that, knowing, as I did

not know, my limitations. It was that I could not believe in her God, could not love her Saviour."

"And that is past now?" asked Réné in a low voice.

Touillier put out his hand and stopped the young man as he walked beside him. "Réné," he said solemnly, "it is the awful retribution of my selfishness that I cannot believe, cannot love. My heart is hard and dead to all but the memory of her. I am shut up as in an iron cage of despair. Only in one direction is there hope. I look upward to the sky and remember that her last words to me, ten years ago, were: 'The time will come when you will know my Lord and be joined in love to him. In his presence we shall at last be one.' And there are times when I dare to hope that in some undreamed of hereafter her words may come true."

He walked on still bareheaded, and neither spoke until they overtook Caroff, waiting for them on a stone beside the road.

CHAPTER XIV

It was nearly noon on the first day of November when a weary group climbed the last reach of the hill road and passed through the old gateway of the ancient little town Guegnon. George walked first, leading the faithful if sometimes intractable Georgette, and Thérèse limped beside her, one hand upon little Ernestine, sleepily nodding on her uncomfortable perch upon the donkey's back, among the kitchen battery and other household goods.

There had been sad changes for the crew of the Jolie Charbonnière since the night when Jean had been so disastrously moved by the anarchist's eloquence. Jean had been condemned to three months in prison for rioting, and Thérèse, helpless to maintain her family, had been fain to sell the berrichon to their old canal-side neighbor, Pierre Ducros, to whom the summer had been favorable. Georgette, of course, he did not want; Jean might sing his donkey's praises as he would, did not all the world know that Pierre's Nantine was a far more intelligent and at the same time more powerful animal? And Thérèse had been glad of the sturdy little donkey's services, as with her children she wearily tramped the miles across the plain and over the hills to the old Morvan home, which she had not seen since twenty years ago she had quitted it to seek a service place, in that dark week when

her father had been brought home from the forest, crushed to death beneath a tree he was felling.

The narrow street beyond the gateway was as silent as a city of the dead. Two irregular parallels of stone and stucco stretched away, high and blank, with here and there upon their top a belated pumpkin yellowing in the wintry sun, and here and there a fast-closed gateway, or a window in the gable end of a house. From behind the garden walls came an occasional sound as of the munching of cattle or the scratching of fowls, but of human beings not a sign.

"How still it is, mother," said George uneasily. "Does no one live in this town?"

Thérèse roused herself. It is the *Toussaint;* I had forgotten," she said. "They will all be in the cemetery," and the little cavalcade moved on.

The church was perched upon an eminence quite beyond the village. Around it lay the old graveyard, populous with wooden crosses, on every one of which hung a freshly placed wreath of immortelles. Here and there a woman dressed in black was kneeling beside a grave, but nearly every one was making part of a group clustered around a man who was talking earnestly. George looked at him curiously as they slowly drew near.

"Mother," he whispered, "that man was on that berrichon, the captain lady's boat. Don't you remember him?"

Thérèse shook her head. "It is always that boat with you. Can you think of nothing else? I don't remember the man at all."

George was right, however. It was Loic Caroff, who after Réné Clerino had left him at Avallon to return to Paris, had tarried in that most interesting and picturesque city, with the intent of distributing tracts and if possible selling Bibles there and in the hamlets round about. Near a railroad though they are, these hamlets are as sequestered from the busy world as if in the heart of Asia; schools are few and churches fewer, and with the people's religion are mingled many superstitions, inherited perhaps from the Hunnish ancestry to whom the Morvandais, so different from other French folk, are attributed. All that Caroff had seen of them, during the fortnight already spent there with his friend Clerino, only increased his strong desire to carry the light of a simple Gospel into these beautiful but darkened regions, and afoot or upon his wheel he had spent the intervening days in the picturesque Cousin valley or upon the heights above it, telling the simple old story of the love of Jesus Christ.

In general he returned at night to Avallon, and in part because of Touillier's evident affection for his friend Clerino, in part because the schoolmaster interested him, he had cultivated the acquaintance accidentally formed on the church tower at Vezelay. Touillier indeed had not been communicative as to his personal interests, but on the subject of superstition and its resulting evils the two were heartily in accord. Both also were interested in the character of the Morvan people, and Caroff was not at all surprised when the schoolmaster proposed to

join him in a somewhat longer excursion than usual, when the festival of All Saints falling on the day before the weekly holiday gave him liberty to do so.

When Thérèse and her children entered the little cemetery at Guegnon, Caroff was telling the villagers the story of Lazarus—the hero of a thousand Morvandais legends—and how the Lord Jesus raised him from the dead. The story finished, the application made, the audience broke up, some talking in twos or threes, some pressing around Caroff and eagerly accepting his little tracts.

Touillier had stood somewhat aloof, but he joined his friend as Caroff moved toward the cemetery gate, and when George came up to them he was saying: "Even though the story you told is not precisely true, your teachings are far better for these folk than the gross superstitions they now hold."

"But it is true," said a boyish voice at his side, "Jesus can do everything."

Touillier turned in surprise and George, abashed, drew back. He had not realized that his thought had been audibly uttered.

"What do you know about it, boy?" the schoolmaster asked, more severely perhaps than he was aware.

Abashed though he was, the boy stood his ground.

"The captain-lady told me," he replied. "And besides—I *know* he can."

At the word "captain-lady" Caroff gazed atten-

tively at George, his mother, the donkey and little Ernestine, now wide awake, her sightless eyes turned in the direction of the voices.

"He's going to make me see, by-and-bye," said Ernestine.

An expression of deep pity softened the hard lines of the schoolmaster's face, and Caroff exclaimed:

"Is this the little blind girl Mrs. Pipotin told me of? But what are you all doing here in the hills? I thought you were tracker folk."

"So we are," said Thérèse with an admonitory glance at George as she entered upon the story she had devised for the benefit of her village friends. "But there is nothing to live on down there, in winter, and up here we can find something to do during the cold weather, and there will be the floatage for my husband when he—comes out of the hospital."

"He is ill, then, your husband," began Caroff, but his words were interrupted by a swarm of villagers, enveloping Thérèse and bearing her away. Some one had recognized her, another had doubted, and all had joined excitedly in the debate whether indeed this "mother of a family" was the girl that had gone away so long ago and never been heard of since. Even the prayers that yet remained to be offered beside the graves were forgotten in this new interest, and though Caroff's tracts were thriftily thrust into pockets, his teachings dropped out of minds now thoroughly absorbed in the question of

establishing their old neighbor and her children in the long deserted house that had once been her home.

And so the winter drew on—a winter of comparative peace for Thérèse and a time of strange delight for George. That they were very poor mattered little in a community where every one was to the last degree abstemious and self-denying. The days which, with his mother and little Ernestine, he spent in the forest gathering dead wood to warm their decaying house, were days of wonder and delight. The days when, leaving his mother at home with her distaff, spinning wool for a more prosperous neighbor and caring for Ernestine the while, George climbed the forest-clad heights to where the charcoal burners were completing their long summer's work, were days of revelation to him. The Thursday afternoons when he joined the schoolboys in their play, floating in the chilly waters of the baby Cure the defective sabots their fathers had rather grudgingly given them, drinking from them now and again the sparkling water that never has such flavor as when quaffed from the freshly cut beech wood; the warm mornings when he led Ernestine out upon the common where the little goose girl, hardly older than her blind playfellow, proudly guarded her cackling charge, not yet housed from the winter cold—these November days were days of ecstasy to the boy. And when, before the winter rains came on, old neighbor Marcel offered to teach him the art and mystery of

sabot making, in return for such services as he should render when once he became a little proficient, the boy's joy and gratitude knew no bounds.

He saw Jesus in it all. The lesson he had learned that last evening on the *Bon Berger* had never failed to be his support in every time of trouble. Jesus had come to his aid by sending the captain-lady; he would always stand by and help him. True, he had not yet made Ernestine see; but he would, when the right time came. And meanwhile, he himself would be careful to please him. There was little temptation to steal, for no one needed to go hungry in Guegnon; but as the cold grew intense and dead wood in the forest scarce, he stoutly resisted his mother's suggestion that a deft clip of the hatchet here and there in the green wood would result in dead wood a week later, and bravely stood out against the fascinating temptation to join the boys in poaching expeditions on moonlight nights.

But as the dark days of an unusually cold and stormy winter dragged slowly by the boy's heart began to fail him. His mother, always fretful, and now deeming herself to have ample reason to repine, undermined the boy's patience to a degree that neither could appreciate. Little Ernestine's glad certainty that Jesus was going to make her see, pretty soon, gradually faded away, and her tears were all the more frequent and bitter, because of disappointed hope. The supply of wool for Thérèse's distaff grew scant, and George was

as yet too inexpert in the enchanting work of sabot making to earn more than the smallest wages. And so by degrees the darkness of the skies was reflected in the deeper darkness of his soul. It was all a mistake; Jesus did not care for them, or if he did, what was the use of a helpless Jesus who could not make Ernestine see?

CHAPTER XV

RAIN, blustering winds, snow! For weeks this was the weather at Clamecy where the *Bon Berger* was wintering. But if the unprecedented cold and storm brought its discomforts, the mission family endured them in good company, for their boat was one of some forty or fifty which were laid up for the winter in the rivers and canal which form a junction at Clamecy, and canal boat people always welcome the opportunity for social intercourse which the winter brings to their otherwise lonely lives.

So in spite of storm and sleet, Bellah and her children found themselves engaged in a round of sociabilities. Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin in fact began it, by inviting the inhabitants of the nearest boats to take coffee with them. On the return visit they found themselves generally in well finished, well furnished cabins, some of them even beautifully fitted up, with plenty of handy cupboards, and beds in curtained recesses. The men were clean and respectable, a hard working, honest class, some of them owners of their boats and others in receipt of good salaries, altogether a different sort from the half-gypsy tracker folk.

Though intelligent, these canal people are in general entirely without religion, being from the nature of their calling unattached to any particular

church. But these neighbors of the mission boat gladly received the tracts and papers which the Pipotins had to distribute, if only for the occupation they furnished for the long days of idleness. Soon they began to buy Testaments and even Bibles, and many were the interesting discussions with the evangelist and his wife over the coffee cups on the dark winter afternoons.

There were other boats less well equipped to withstand the discomforts of winter, boats intended for an inferior grade of traffic, whose inhabitants suffered severely from the inclement weather. They shared equally with the others in the social life of the *Bon Berger*, and more eagerly than the others accepted the opportunities afforded by the meetings, gladly braving sleet and snow, bringing their children with them, for an hour and a half of warmth. The sufferings of the children on these poorer boats wrung Bellah's tender heart, and Nicolas always felt a peculiar glow of pleasure when he could look down upon a score of the little creatures sitting on the platform at his feet, on evenings when the room was crowded.

For there were others who came, beside the canal boat people. Not indeed the well to do people of the city. It is not such who brave storms and darkness to hear the Gospel. But there had once been a station of the McAll Mission at Clamecy, and though that was years ago, it was not long before those who had been wont to gather in the little stone paved room in a back street discovered that

the young preacher on the boat had the same message for them as the old pastor in the hall, and they flocked to hear again the blessed "old, old story." The familiarity of these people with the hymns went far to make the meetings attractive to the others.

Most lustily of all sang old *Maman* Nicole, an aged peasant of seventy-eight. She came every evening with her lantern to light her along the dark roads, for she lived in a wretched little hut in the outskirts of the town. One evening when Mr. Pipotin spoke on the parable of the Ten Virgins, she arose and said that she well understood the need of having a light to guide her steps heavenward, and that henceforth she would try to be a light for her neighbors, to show them the path to the Saviour. Dear old *Maman* Nicole! Bellah and her children grew to be very fond of the simple-hearted old woman, and often when the weather permitted they went to her cottage, to carry some trifling comfort and sing hymns with her. She never wearied of the delightful exercise; her cracked old voice mingled with the fresh tones of the little girls in a way that to the young mother seemed inexpressibly affecting. *Maman* Nicole was living on the pension of ten cents a day, granted under certain circumstances by the French government to aged persons, and she was one of the happiest persons imaginable. "The Lord has done me much good," she used to say when they found her without fuel, or scant of food; "shall I not bear my small

trials?" Every week she gave two cents to the poor, for she said, "I must share with those who are not as well off as I."

The children's meetings were made particularly interesting by the superior alertness of the canal boat children, accustomed to many vicissitudes. Besides these children were many from the city, and among them some rather better dressed than the others, whose parents did not attend the evening meetings. On inquiry, Bellah learned that these were mostly the children of *disséminés*, those scattered Protestants who, living where there is no Protestant Church, and having been for generations, perhaps, without regular religious privileges, still cling to their ancestral faith, though often ignorant of its very rudiments.

This discovery inevitably lent some slight emphasis to the fact that certain children were of Protestant parentage, and Bellah was therefore not surprised when one Sunday two bright little boys presented themselves with the information, "We are Protestants, madame." They were exceedingly nice children, well behaved and attentive, and the fact that they were absolutely ignorant of the first elements of religion was sufficiently accounted for by their claim to be Protestants, destitute perhaps for generations of religious instruction, though it is not often that even the most sequestered Protestant children are ignorant of the very name of God, as were Gaspard and Lucien Bonnet. But their bright little minds seemed fairly to leap forward to

meet Bellah's teaching, and one day little six-year-old Lucien exclaimed with a rapt expression, "Oh, if I could see God, I would embrace him!"

However inclement the weather, these boys were never absent either on Sunday or Thursday, although they lived at the farthest extremity of the city. One day when the new fallen snow lay deep upon the ground, Bellah remonstrated with Gaspard for bringing his little brother, whose shoes were hardly in condition for such traveling. "Madame," replied Gaspard, earnestly, "we could not stay away. We think of just two days in the week. We say there are so many days until Thursday and then only two until Sunday."

"You ought to call on the Bonnets, Nicolas," said Bellah, after this conversation, "such good children must have good parents, but they must be wofully ignorant, religiously."

To Bellah's surprise, when her husband asked Gaspard to direct him to his father's house, the boy colored, stammered, and seemed much embarrassed. He finally consented, though with very manifest reluctance, and led the way across the city, to an open place in the outskirts where, to the evangelist's surprise, the only sign of a dwelling was a hut of boards and brushwood forming a sort of extension to an old omnibus. What Tréville had told him of the anarchist Bonnet flashed across Nicolas's mind, with the recollection that these children were named Bonnet; so that he was not all unprepared when, on being ushered

through the low door, he found himself in the presence of his former antagonist and of a patient-faced woman, evidently the mother of the boys.

If Nicolas was surprised at the meeting, the anarchist was simply astounded. "You call this Christian, no doubt," he sneered when at last he found words. "You contaminate my boys unknown to me—" he hesitated under the calm gaze of his visitor, flushed shamefacedly, and then said: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Evangelist, I ought not to be rude to you in my own house."

"Permit me to explain," said Nicolas. "Had we known that the boys were your children we should surely not have encouraged them to come to our school. They told us that they were Protestants."

Both parents turned in surprise toward the children.

"Because, papa," said Gaspard, "I thought they let only Protestants come. And I don't know what a Protestant is," he added.

"That is true, Gaspard," said the mother. "The boy never heard the word before."

"No more than the word God," said Nicolas, gravely. "I am bound to tell you that your children now know at least enough about God to love him."

"No doubt," replied the anarchist with a sarcastic smile, "you have promised my children 'a beautiful home in heaven;' you see how beautiful is their earthly home. You have promised them

the pardon of their sins, though you know that they have none worth mentioning. And you call this 'the good news.' Offer ice to an Esquimau, offer furs to a man burning with fever and call it the good news! I call it the old sing-song. When I see the laboring man get his rights, the poor sharing the comforts of the rich, then I shall value your Christianity, welcome your good news, believe in your God! Till then," he looked expressively around his poor abode, "till then, Mr. Evangelist, I prefer to say 'Good-bye.'"

He made a not uncourteous gesture of farewell, and retired into the omnibus which formed a second room; and Nicolas, taking a kindly leave of the mother and children, went away.

The snow had turned to rain, and as Nicolas drew near the river Beuvron, in which the *Bon Berger* was stationed, he saw that the water had risen greatly during his hour's absence. Experienced sailor that Nicolas was, and thoroughly familiar with the management of the boat, he had never spent a winter so near the head-waters of a large river, and it was with consternation that he saw the rapid rising of the stream. He made the evening service as short as possible, but already the water was even with the gangway when the meeting broke up.

"You'd better let me stay on board to-night," said more than one of the canal boat neighbors, but Nicolas declined, and after testing the security of the anchors and pins he went to rest.

Hardly to sleep, for the rising wind and waves shook the boat violently, and with the first gleam of dawn Nicolas was outside. He found a rushing stream fifteen yards wide between the boat and the shore, the strong gangway lying on its side in the water, the mooring chains submerged. A moment later one of the mooring pins gave way, the pole that kept the boat off the bank broke in two, the gangway fell into the water, the boat swung around to the full fury of the blast, in imminent peril of being swept down the river and dashed in pieces against the pier of the bridge.

CHAPTER XVI

NICOLAS sprang to the ropes, at the same time shouting to Bellah to wrap the children up and bring them out. His shout was answered from the shore, and he saw Bonnet running toward the boat. The anarchist waded into the icy water, and lent his intense energy to supplement the efforts of Nicolas until others came to their aid and the boat was securely moored, not now near the other boats, but at some little distance below, where a high bank made it possible to communicate with the shore. When Nicolas found leisure to thank the anarchist for his help, Bonnet only smiled sarcastically, and said that it was his religion to help his fellow creatures in time of need.

It was with some anxiety that before noon Nicolas saw blocks of ice floating down the stream, for that meant that the rains had set free the headwaters of the river. Before night, came a rumor that filled all hearts with consternation. The new lock thirty miles above on the Yonne was said to have given way, and the ice was sweeping down upon them.

All was now breathless activity along the water side. Spare ropes were brought out and every boat made doubly fast to its moorings. Many of the boat people moved their furniture to the shore, and late in the evening came orders from the munici-

pality that no one should sleep on the boats that night. The order, however, did not apply to the mission boat, for its position was believed to be a safe one, and Mr. Pipotin was known to be an experienced captain.

The hall was crowded that evening, but a feverish restlessness pervaded the assembly. At the close many remained talking upon the bank, others walked up to meet the flood, which was said to be traveling slowly down the river, a wall of heaped up blocks of ice. Nicolas remained outside, and Bellah and her maid Justine laid wrappings for the children ready at hand, and waited for what might come.

The church clocks had just struck four when a distant roar was heard, like a railway train crossing a bridge. In the strong moonlight could plainly be seen the heaped up wall moving down with awful deliberation. About a hundred yards above the *Bon Berger* was moored the public wash-house, a floating structure fifty feet long. The wall of ice bore down upon it with immense force, the hawsers snapped and it was swept directly upon the mission boat. A cry of warning went up from the crowd upon the bank, and snatching up the children, Bellah and Justine rushed out upon the platform. A hundred hands were outstretched to help. The children were taken from their arms and carried to a place of safety, and just as the wash-house bore down upon the boat some one lifted Bellah bodily and set her down upon the bank. She forgot even

her children as with beating heart she looked to see the *Bon Berger* crushed to atoms. But as the square prow of the unwieldy craft rushed against her bow, an iron boat belonging to the wash-house swung between, was squeezed together like an orange, bent almost double and saved the collision by a foot of space!

"Thank God!" burst from a hundred lips, and Bellah, suddenly mindful of her own deliverance, turned to thank her rescuer. She did not recognize him; but she would gladly have detained him when he said, "It was nothing, Madame; what do I not owe you? Only tell your husband that though Jean Poêle broke his pledge he will never drink again." He slipped from her detaining hand and was gone.

It was no time to urge gratitude upon one who declined to receive it; Bellah was fully occupied with the need of looking after her little daughters, and Jean Poêle walked away, unobserved. Three days before he had come out of prison, and started to join his wife and children in their Morvan home. Ashamed to be seen by those who knew him, he had passed the day in an empty *cantonnier's* refuge by the roadside, and had walked forward during the night. By morning he was in a country where he ran no risk of being recognized; but impatient to get forward, and his habit of walking coming to his aid, he still pushed on, stopping only for a few hours sleep in some brushwood cottage or road-mender's hut, and taking advantage of the moon-

SAVED! THE BON BERGER IS BEHIND THE PLATFORM—SEE PAGE 142

light upon the snow to set out again without waiting for the late winter dawn. Thus it came about that he had reached Clamecy in time to be of a slight service to one who in his hours of solitude had been much in his thoughts, because her name had been often spoken by his little Ernestine.

During his imprisonment he had had much time for thought and no opportunity to drink, and realizing what his love of liquor had cost him, he had resolved to give up absolutely and for all time the use of alcohol. The resolution had seemed easy to him then, but the weariness of his forced march—all the more weary for his three months of inaction—had awakened the old craving, and he was thinking longingly of the cabaret, which without ever having seen it he knew must stand in the outskirts of Clamecy, when the peril of the mission boat, the opportunity to do a kindness to the young woman whom he had once seen with his blind child upon her knee, had changed the current of his thought. He walked past the cabaret without even noticing it, and having inquired his way of a rural guard whom the inundation had aroused to early activity, he struck across the country toward the hills, his whole mind now fixed upon his family. He had heard nothing from them since they had bidden him a tearful adieu in the prison. How was it faring with them?

At that very hour Thérèse and her children were trudging through the snow-covered forest, bound on pilgrimage to Sainte Marie of the Turning Stone.

The recent weeks had been very hard upon Thérèse, for to the discomforts of unusually severe weather had been added the bewildering pain of an incomprehensible change in George. Incomprehensible to her, it was far more bewildering to the boy himself, who could not understand why the abandonment of hope should make him so reckless of duty, so cold to his mother's reproaches, so stolid even in face of his beloved little Ernestine's tears.

For with George's departing hope had also fled his belief not only in the love of Jesus, but also in his very existence. He had prayed and prayed that Ernestine's sight might be restored, and Jesus had not made Ernestine see. The light that for months had illumined the boy's soul went out and left him blind as little Ernestine herself, and with no strong brother hand to lead him, as he was even now leading his little sister over the rough places in their forest walk.

For, in despair at George's inexplicable moroseness, and unable to endure the uncontrollable grief which had succeeded Ernestine's glad patience of hope, Thérèse had fallen back upon her native belief in the efficacy of Ste. Marie of the Turning Stone, and had proposed a pilgrimage to the shrine, without waiting for the return of spring. The neighbors all approved of the pious plan. It was long since any one from Guegnon had made the pilgrimage, but the common memory was well stocked with tales of miracles wrought in behalf of mothers and grandmothers now in glory, and no

one dreamed of doubting that the Turning Stone was as efficacious now as fifty years ago. For were not the virtues of Sainte Marie as permanent as heaven itself? Sainte Marie Madeleine who, as all the Morvan knows, was shipwrecked with her brother, St. Lazarus, and her sister, Sainte Marthe, on the coast of France and so brought the Gospel to the Morvan, where living, dying and being buried they had ever since been potent to work miracles. And so the neighbors had bestirred themselves to give the pilgrims a good send-off, every one contributing something of food or wrappings against the cold, old Marcel going so far as to bring for Ernestine a dainty little pair of sabots, that would have brought a good price in the August fair at Autun.

George had submitted to the bustle and excitement without protest and without interest. If his mother chose to commit the folly of taking Ernestine on pilgrimage, of course he would go with them, but he knew too much now to believe in any power for good beyond what he could himself see and understand. He trudged silently along at his mother's side, carrying the wallet of provisions, leading Ernestine by the hand, or carrying her on his back when the way was rough or the snow drifted. It was one of the rare bright days of the stormy winter; the sun filtered through the bare oak branches and made exquisite tracery on the snow, the crows flew cawing overhead, dark against the tender blue of the winter sky; there was a vague premonition of

spring in the air, that warmed the boy's heart in spite of his gloom. When they had crested the hill and the eastern slope lay before them white in untrodden purity, the gladness of boyhood came over him, and handing the bundle to his mother he squatted upon his heels and taking Ernestine upon his knees coasted down the long reach upon his wooden shoes, after the quickly learned fashion of Morvan boys. The exhiliration of the long slide made his blood tingle, and when Ernestine laughed aloud, gay again with her new hope, not even the conviction that disappointment awaited her could bring back his gloom.

The good nuns of the convent received them kindly, when as dusk was falling they reached the wild valley where the convent stands on a bank above the rapid little Cousin River. They were full of admiration of Thérèse's piety—poor Thérèse, who hardly knew the meaning of the word!—and of pity for little Ernestine's affliction. Large, placid, fair-skinned women these Nivernaise nuns; as evidently made for motherhood as the beautiful white cows of their country, and almost as clearly uncalled to sainthood. Sleepy little Ernestine would have been fed, undressed and coddled as many times over as there were nuns in the convent could they have had their way, though Thérèse could not but smile at the awkwardness of their unaccustomed ministrations.

They were still more awkward, good kindly women! when it came to counselling the poor

mother as to the best means of propitiating the saint—or the Turning Stone, they were not quite sure in which of the two resided the miracle working power. No miracle had in fact been wrought in their day, and the convent being of comparatively recent foundation, and they not of this part of the country, they were indeed not so familiar with the legendary forms and ceremonies as Thérèse herself. But they all agreed that a vigil in the chapel would be a fitting initiative, and the Mother Superior herself offered to share the vigil with the weary mother and the more saintly of the sisterhood. What glory to her convent if indeed a miracle should be wrought there!

CHAPTER XVII

In the discussions as to the proper way of propitiating the holy Magdelen or the mysterious stone, George had no part. His bed was in the hay loft above the stable where four beautiful white cows were housed from the winter cold, and the lay sister whose duty included their care had shown him the way thither immediately after supper. Tired with his long walk he had at once fallen asleep, and it was daylight when he awoke and heard the crisp whistle of milk falling into a wooden bucket. The lay sister gave him a draught from the bucket, told him that his mother was at her prayers before the Turning Stone, and directed him to it.

The grey boulder, so balanced on another block of stone as to yield to the slightest touch, stood beside the convent, above the swift little river. Before it in the early sunlight knelt Thérèse, the Mother Superior, and the holiest of the nuns, their faces haggard from a night of prayer, their lips scarcely moving as the beads of their chaplets passed through their fingers. At a short distance were grouped the other sisters, one of them holding little Ernestine wrapped in a blanket. The child's attitude and expression bespoke a feverish expectation, and at the sight George turned sick at heart.

Not that his intelligence would have revolted from the idea of the miraculous efficacy of the

Turning Stone. Six months before he had never heard of prayer, but if he had been told that the Stone had power to heal disease, he would have accepted it readily enough. A hundred superstitions of this sort are devoutly held by country people in various parts of France. But in the revulsion of feeling caused by the inefficacy of his own prayer, offered in unquestioning certainty of an answer, he had come to disbelieve everything that he could not see or could not understand. When one of the sisters motioned to him to go forward and kneel beside his mother, he made an impatient gesture of refusal. Pray? To whom? God? There was no God, or how could Ernestine be blind? All the agony of past disappointment rushed over him. He could have shrieked aloud. He clinched his hands and ground his teeth as he looked on while still the women went on telling their beads, with lips that grew whiter and whiter.

The cold morning hours grew bright with winter sunshine as they slowly wore away. The nuns were shivering, Thérèse almost fainting from exhaustion. The Mother Superior arose at last, took the child in her arms, made the sign of the cross upon her eyes, and prayed aloud that Saint Mary Magdelen would now vouchsafe to show the glory of her shrine. Every eye was eagerly bent upon the face of the child who, quivering with expectation, turned her sightless eyes upward awaiting the miraculous response. Three times the cross was signed and the prayer repeated, all the nuns joining. Then a dead

silence, and then in a broken voice the words from the Superior: "It is of no avail, my children. The holy Madeleine has doubtless withdrawn from this shrine."

With Ernestine's wild cry ringing in his ears, and a vision of his mother falling fainting upon the ground, George tore away down the ravine, rushing he knew not whither, anywhere to lose the poignant agony of his little sister's grief. How far he thus ran he knew not; his brain was in a whirl, his heart was bursting with a wild desire to avenge Ernestine's wrongs on some one—on God, if there had been a God. Blind with agony he did not perceive a man who was slowly walking along the riverside until he ran full against him. Brought to his senses by the shock, George in surprise recognized the man as one whom he had seen in the cemetery on All Saint's Day. Though the stranger's eyes were now concealed behind blue glasses, the boy was sure it was the same.

"You were right," he said abruptly. "Jesus could not do it. There is no Jesus."

Touillier gazed astounded, not recognizing the boy.

"What do you mean?" he asked somewhat sternly.

"You said that Jesus could not raise the dead. He cannot. He is dead himself." And with the words the fountain of the boy's tears was unlocked; he leaned against a tree and wept convulsively.

The schoolmaster remembered the boy now; re-

membered the glad confidence with which he had said, "Jesus can do anything," and with the memory came a vision of the girl child who had said, "He is going to make me see by-and-by." He perceived that he was face to face with one of those tragedies which make or mar character, and which coming so early in a boy's life will more probably mar than make. All the teacher instinct awoke; a strong desire impelled him to turn the evil, whatever it might be, to good, and taking the boy gently by the arm he said,

"Tell me all about it. You were running away from something, were you not? A brave boy never runs away. Turn back and face it and tell me what it is as we go."

And George, turning back with this stranger, poured out all the story. As he listened, the schoolmaster, with the insight into character born of long association with boys, perceived that for this boy the question of God was a question of moral life or death, and with all the power of his keen intellect, all the help of his well trained logical faculty he set himself to prove to the boy that which he himself entirely disbelieved, that which he had persisted in denying at the heaviest possible cost—the hand of the woman he loved.

It was indeed a simple thing to refute poor George's passionate but weak arguments against the existence of God. But as he argued, patiently, simply, using the most elementary language and the simplest reasoning, a great wonder took pos-

session of Touillier, for the logic on which he had based his own denial began to seem to him as flimsy as that of this ignorant boy. Arguments that had always seemed to him irrefutable lost all their force in the face of that simple plea for the existence and the love of God which he was repeating from memory—the memory of long past conversations with Herriedd Moirec before her father's accession to fortune restored him to the name Clerino. Her arguments had seemed to him trivial then; how came they to be so cogent now? They had appeared to him then as merely the comforting dream of a sorrowful and mystically inclined girl; whence came that light which now gave them the imperative of reality?

Suddenly he knew. It came from the cross of Jesus Christ. That cross interpreted the mystery of sorrow and of pain; it revealed and it made intelligible the love of God. A blaze of illumination blotted out all else but that marvellous and interpreting love. He forgot George's presence, and reaching out his arms and lifting his eyes heavenward, he exclaimed, "Lord, I believe! Help me to overcome my unbelief!"

He did not know that he was repeating the prayer of ages; it was to him but the imperative cry of his own soul. George listened bewildered.

"You do believe him, sir? You believe that God is good? And that Jesus is alive?"

Touillier was recalled to the present by the boy's eager questions. Again he realized all that, for

George, depended on his answer. Summoning all that power of clear explanation and illuminating illustration which long practice as a teacher had made his, he carefully put in order the reasons for believing that which the boy had formerly believed without reason, simply because he wanted it to be true.

The short winter day was darkening when at last they reached the convent. Thérèse and Ernestine were sleeping the sleep of sorrow, and as the kindly nuns invited the walkers into the refectory, the twelve-year-old appetite became normally dominant. George had eaten nothing all day, and in the comfort of salt fish and black bread and milk he forgot the conflict of the preceding hours.

The boy slept soundly in his bed of hay, but the schoolmaster, lying beside him, did not close his eyes. He was living over again those years of the far away past when he had chosen between love and ambition, and had parted from the girl whom he had loved from childhood, believing that the strolling player's daughter could not advance and would rather hinder his rise in his profession. It was a mere accident that before he learned his mistake, and perceived that he could not live without Herriedd Moirec, she had become Herriedd Clerino, and an heiress; and the two knew each other too well and loved each other too really for either to entertain for a moment the thought that Touillier's return to his allegiance might be from mercenary motives. But meanwhile the Mission Boat had

come into Herriedd's life and she had learned the love of God; and it had been to her so real a support in trouble, had so passed into the very fibre of her soul, that she could not ally herself with one who denied the existence of him who to her was the most real fact in the universe. And so the two had parted, and for ten years Clemencz Touillier had not looked into Herriedd's face, though he loved her and believed that she loved him still.

And Herriedd was dying; her brother Réné had told him so. And now as he lay upon the hay in the dark loft, living over one by one those long past experiences, a great desire took possession of him to give to her last days the joy of knowing that they were at last one in the love of God. As the dawn began to glimmer his resolve was formed. He would go to Clamecy, learn from Bellah Pipotin of Herriedd's welfare and whereabouts, and follow her.

He was thankful now for the suddenly failing sight that had finally quenched ambition, forced him to secure a substitute for his school work, and driven him, at the doctor's behest, to spend long hours of every day in the open air. He would see Bellah, go to Paris and make arrangements for an indefinite absence, and then follow Herriedd if it were to the heart of Africa.

He was glad to learn that his road was the same as that which Thérèse and her children must take. It was a relief from his own thoughts to help in carrying Ernestine, to talk at times with George,

even to listen to Thérèse's more or less incoherent remarks, which chiefly rang the changes upon the mortification she expected to feel on meeting the neighbors, with no miracle to boast of. The situation was in fact an embarrassing one, and the schoolmaster was glad for her sake to find on reaching Guegnon that public attention was distracted by the arrival of a distinguished stranger, no other than Thérèse's husband, Jean Poêle. In the general excitement, Touillier easily contented himself with a brief farewell to George and pushed on, determined to make yet a few miles on his journey before dark.

He passed the night in a quaint little straggling village by the riverside, built entirely of brushwood faggots ; the doors and windows cut square in the singular building material. There was no house of entertainment in the village, but the principal inhabitant hospitably invited him to share with his two hostlers and a traveling harness mender a large loft over his rambling stable.

As the schoolmaster and harness mender were sociably performing their morning ablutions at the stable pump, the latter informed his fellow lodger that he combined with his regular occupation the business of colporteur of good literature. Their toilet completed, before proceeding to overhaul the harnesses of the establishment he exhibited to the schoolmaster the contents of his bag of books. They were chiefly small religious tracts and Scripture portions, and with a strange feeling of repara-

tion to Herriedd, Touillier bought a Gospel of St. Luke.

"May I ask," asked the harness maker, "if you ever visited any hall of the Popular Mission in Paris?"

Touillier's mind went back to the evening when he had seen Herriedd for the last time. It was on the boat in Paris, surrounded by those friends of the mission whose influence he then so deeply resented. "You know that mission?" he asked in surprise.

"It is more than ten years," replied the harness maker, "since I went up to Paris for the marriage of my daughter. She had been at service in the house of that good Englishman who, she told me, first thought of bringing the comforts of religion to our misguided countrymen, the communards. Ah, that was a good man! You knew him sir?"

Touillier recalled that benevolent countenance, beaming with unselfish joy, which he had seen for the first and last time on that one evening, and it was with a twinge of pain that he replied, "Only slightly. I met him once."

"Well," returned the harness maker, "he never spoke to me, but I knew from his face that God loved me. My daughter showed me the way to the meetings, and there I heard what I knew must be true. I wanted all the world to hear it. And as I am too ignorant to tell the story I bought a quantity of these little books which tell it as I never could do. My trade takes me far and wide

in the course of a year, and I can always give a little book and say a few words to awaken curiosity as to its contents. Sometimes in the farmhouses they ask me to read to them of an evening. But yesterday I met a colporteur of a different sort. He was traveling with his wife and two sons in a rickety old omnibus, distributing anarchistic leaflets and making anarchistic speeches. I tried to give him some of my literature, but he would not touch it. He is on his way to the south of France, and he proposes to stir up the people there to become anarchists. I told him that I would rather stir them up to become Christians, but he sneered at me and went on his way. Bonnet his name is."

Touillier had never heard of Bonnet and the name made no impression.

CHAPTER XVIII

The sexton turned the key in the church door. "M. le curé wishes for anything more?" he asked; and when Father Chardonnet made a gesture of denial he turned away.

"You may leave the key with me," said the priest, and having received the antique instrument, green with the rust of two centuries, Father Chardonnet walked to the edge of the bluff, while the sexton returned to the interrupted industry of turning the clods in his vegetable garden.

Standing on the edge of the bluff the priest looked down; upon the river Yonne meandering through the broad intervale, upon the noble bridge and the white road on the farther side that led straight away across the fields to the market town two miles back among the trees; upon the great cathedral tower of Sens, standing square against the sky upon the far horizon; upon the little village of Clarsigny at his feet, with its gardens and its fields sloping to the river. Then turning, he swept the near hills, the tiny chapel of an ancient "pilgrimage" far above on a prominent rock, the white road, villa-bordered here and there, winding down in long sweeps, and so to the little church at his side, venerable in its sixteenth century simplicity, a strong contrast to the modern ugliness of the communal school beside it, with the sexton at his spading in

the garden. With a sudden impulse he fitted the heavy key into the old-fashioned lock, and went in again.

It was the plain country church of peasant people, sparely furnished with a few wooden benches near the altar, the walls soiled and discolored with age. High on one side hung a small oil painting of no artistic value; but below the altar was an exquisite sculpture of Christ rising from the tomb, surrounded by soldiers, the Marys and a bishop, and above a series of very old colored reliefs of bishops and martyrs, with the inscription, dated 1565:

Maitre iehan ernoud cure de ceans a Done ceste contretable pries Diev povr lvy*

and on the other side:

VNG sevl DiEV tV Adoreras et aimera parfaitment†

The beauty of the ancient sculpture, the simplicity of the ill-spelled inscription, the poverty of the bare little church, were like a soothing balm to the young priest's heart. He drew near to the altar and knelt upon the wooden floor. For the first time in many days it seemed to him that he could pray.

For he had known perfectly well and resented with all his heart, the reason why he had been transferred from the important little city of Montargis to this riverside village of which until now he had never even heard the name. He perfectly understood, and his whole soul rebelled against the

*Master John Ernoud. curé of this place, has given this tablet; pray God for him.

†One sole God thou shalt adore, and love him perfectly.

fact, that the disturbance concerning the Mission Boat, which he had fomented six months before, had drawn upon him the critical and unsympathetic attention of the bishop, and incidentally had wrought this change in his career, brought this blight upon his prospects and hopes of usefulness. His mind was tumultuous with protest against such a result of loyalty to the church, tumultuous with indignation that his bishop, instead of standing by him and bringing his own great authority to do away with the evil wrought or threatened by the boat, had weakly yielded to the popular craze for a new sensation, permitted the boat to go on upon its pestilent way, and smothered him—him, who was ready to risk all to champion the true faith—had smothered him in this obscure parish. The pride which had forbidden him to appear to understand the meaning of it all, which had forbidden him to give way when parting with his adored sister Lucie, bidding adieu, with her, to the most exquisite happiness he had ever known, had taken its revenge in inward tumult, and for days his soul had been tempest tossed. Here before that resurrection tablet it suddenly found rest in the intoxicating joy of martyrdom. What had he not sacrificed for the sake of the faith? What would he not still farther sacrifice? Let that Mission boat come again into his parish and they should see. Though it cost him his cassock he would be the valiant champion of his church, and of the time honored rights of the parish priest.

THE BOYS WAITING FOR THEIR MEETING – SEE PAGE 160

THE GATEWAY OF GUEGNON—SEE PAGE 194

He rose from his knees serene in a great resolution, almost feeling the halo of martyrdom above his brow. As he moved toward the door a step sounded upon the planks, and a woman came in, a hearty cheery woman of middle age, tall and fair like his sister, and portly as years would doubtless make Lucie to be. She held out her hand with a frank gesture of welcome.

"You are my own countryman, and I should be first to welcome you, my father," she said. "You also are Nivernais, are you not? I was coming down the hill from our vineyard; I had been up to see how the vines bore last week's pruning; and I saw you come in here. So I thought I would come in and tell you the legend of the church. Though I am not of the country I know it better than most who are. For you see I have a fancy for legends and they stick in my memory."

She had a pleasant voice and the priest made no attempt to arrest the stream of her eloquence. It was soothing to him, accustomed to a woman's friendship, to have this motherly fellow-countrywoman take an interest in him.

"This is the picture of it," she went on, turning to the crude old painting high upon the wall. "You see it is the inside of this very church, and there is a doe upon the altar, and a wolf below? Well, that is *la biquc qui a prit le loup* as they said in their old time French. The story goes that a wolf was once chasing a doe—all these hills were in forest then—and she ran into this church and

leaped upon the altar, and the wolf dared not touch her, and the folk came in and killed him. So they painted a picture of it, and ever since the country folk have called this church "The doe that captured the wolf." Some say that is a satire on the priests, but I know nothing about that."

She laughed in her cheery way and was silent while the priest stood thoughtful before the quaint old picture. Then as he turned to leave the church, she went on:

"We are not a church-going people, we of Clarsigny, and we ask little of our priest but to marry and bury us. And for the matter of that, a good many of us find that the civil authorities can do both quite as well as the priest. Our last good father was more or less like the wolf in enjoyment of hunting, though he was far too wise to get caught. We saw little of him and now he has a large and wealthy parish. So you see we have been well trained, and if you will hear a few confessions at Christmas and Easter, and say as short a mass as you like on Sunday mornings, you may hunt or fish or keep bees, like the old curé who was here when I first came (having married the innkeeper), and none of us will ask what you are doing."

She spoke kindly and with evident desire to give pleasure, and the priest was too wise to protest against her standard of clerical duty. He walked beside her, while she discoursed about the parish who owned this field and who this vineyard, as they descended the winding hill road.

At a turn of the road they met an elderly woman, small and slight in figure, with a refined face, but wearing the ordinary dress of the district, plain black gown, large apron, and plaid head kerchief. Her sad face was crossed by a pleasant smile as the innkeeper's wife addressed her, and she answered in a gentle high-bred voice:

"Thank you, Mme Vaillant; my husband is less feeble now that he can sit upon the terrace in the sun; and my daughter"—a spasm of pain crossed her face, "she is quite comfortable to-day."

"That is good! And here is our new curé, Mme Languard. I think he will not be so busy but that he will be able to visit *La Cerisette* if you choose to invite him."

Mme Languard held out a white, well-shaped hand, hard with work. "We are not accustomed to a priest who has time to visit his flock, Father Chardonnet, but you will always be welcome at the manor-house," and fitting a key into the lock of a door in the high garden wall she disappeared with a gesture of farewell.

Father Chardonnet had no need to ask "Who is she," for Mme Vaillant at once proffered the information. M. Languard was the lord of the manor, rich, it was believed, though Mme Vaillant made bold to doubt it, very penurious and nearly bedridden. The daughter had made a brilliant marriage, to a marquis, in fact, but two years after she had returned to her father's house. She had never gone out since, and popular rumor had it that she

was deranged. "You may not care for such visits," she concluded, "but Mme Languard would be very grateful. And life is not easy for her."

A fleeting ideal of another sort of martyrdom than that of which he had felt conscious of the halo crossed the young priest's mind, but they had reached the inn at the entrance of the village, and as Mme Vaillant paused on the threshold, she asked: "You come to us for your meals? At what hour will M. le curé dine? Pity there is no presbytery here, and no house that could be spared to him. But M. le curé will find Widow Cauteney's house clean and the foster children are very good —hardly cry at all, unless in the early morning. M. le curé knows the way? Till dinner time, then."

The priest walked meditatively along. What a hard parish this would be! No interest in the church, no regular attendance at the mass; how was he to reach the consciences of these men and women?

It mattered little to him that instead of his quiet presbytery with experienced old Marthe to keep everything in order his abode was now to be in the three roomed cottage of a widow who supported herself by caring for the wizened offspring of Parisian petty shopkeepers. The brick floor, the monumental bed whose comfort no courage would dare to trespass upon until it was despoiled of its embroideries and prepared for the night, the rush-bottomed chairs, the peacock feathers on the high mantel, the scanty toilet conveniences—all these were more or less what he was accustomed to. If

the children cried he must learn to bear it; but who would teach him how to touch the men and women of Clarsigny?

He knew that there were many French villages entirely given over to free thinking and this might well be one of them. If so the men would never come near him or his church. How could he meet them and win their interest? He sat down by his one window, which looked upon a courtyard, shared by the four families whose houses opened upon it. Several men were coming home for their noon meal, two of them leading their plough horses. They had been talking as they came, and now they stopped before Father Chardonnet's window to finish the subject.

"Well, I have never seen any need of religion, and the less the women go to confession the better," said one.

"But they say this boat is another sort of thing. I am thinking of walking up to St. Julien next Sunday to see what it is like. What are nine miles of a Sunday afternoon?"

"Wait a month and it will be here and you'll save your walk," said another, and all the rest laughed as they went their several ways.

Father Chardonnet clinched his hands. So that boat was coming here! Following him up! The devil himself must have sent it. What saint would help him to resist this devil? With a murmured appeal to his patron, St. Anthony, once again Father Chardonnet fell upon his knees.

CHAPTER XIX

The joy of the forest had again taken possession of George, the joy of opening spring; of swelling buds, and chippering birds, of thawing earth and ice-free brooks, and the daring delights of floatage. For the great thaw which had so nearly been the destruction of the *Bon Berger* had been the signal for new life in the Morvan forests; the huge logs which the wood-cutters had felled and trimmed during the winter must now be rolled into the full flooded mountain river, and guided to the point where they could be made into rafts, for the still longer journey to shipyard or factory.

In these activities Jean Poêle had a large part. Accustomed to river work, strong and active, he soon became an adept in the important industry. And at his side worked George, father and son alike wellnigh intoxicated with the wine of newly regained freedom. For the boy of twelve to be able to roll off upon an able-bodied father, who appeared not to care for drink, that responsibility for daily bread which had lain so heavy upon him, was as truly an enfranchisement as the discharge from prison had been to his father. And what occupation in all the world includes such enchanting vicissitudes, such harmless perils, such keen delights as floatage? To be alive in early March, alive and in the woods, with the crisp air tingling in your veins

and the noon sun scorching your cheek, with the squirrels frisking and the river tinkling, with the crows calling and the song birds twittering, with men shouting and boys shrieking for mere gladness; to lend one's strength to the rolling of huge logs, to hear them splash into the water, to scamper along the river-side armed with a long pole keeping the log in mid-stream, how imminent a joy was this, how it drove into the background of memory the cold and hunger and tears, the prayers and despair and new-found faith of a few days or weeks ago!

Thérèse, too, was experiencing at least that pleasure which comes from relief from pain. She had welcomed her returning husband with a fervor proportioned to the privations of the recent months, for even a drinking husband is as much better than no husband at all as is the surplus of his earnings above the demands of the wine-shop, and a husband who has resolved never to drink again is to be valued in proportion to one's confidence in his ability to keep his resolution. And Thérèse, weary with struggles, was ready enough with her confidence, and glad to be happy for awhile. Ernestine's blindness was no longer the acute sorrow of earlier days. The child had learned to adapt herself to her lot, the habit of looking after her had become second nature to them all; and with the final abandonment of hope of her cure had come the blessed solace of use and wont. So a calm settled upon the household such as it had not known for many sorrowful months.

By the middle of April the logs were all in the water, and with the last of the floatage it behooved the Poêle family to leave their Morvan home. For though the *Jolie Charbonnière* was no longer his, Jean's best hope of maintaining his family was to take charge of a raft at least as far as to St. Mammès, where he might join the little tracker community and resume his old industry, though under much less favorable auspices. And so the few household goods were made into bundles and farewells were said, and the family set out to follow the last run of logs down the ravine and along the reaches of the joyous little Cure, to the place where the rafts were being made.

But for the fact that in midwinter the faithful Georgette had been sold to the principal proprietor of the district in exchange for food, the journey would have presented no difficulties even to Thérèse and Ernestine. Wild and apparently desolate as was the country, it abounded in the simple hospitalities of a region unspoiled by foreign travel. For on the hill crests and along the riverside were frequent villages, and the roads were populous with long trains of beautiful white oxen drawing great two-wheeled *tombereaux* filled with the products of the winter's industry, bundles of twigs for the bakers' ovens, wooden shoes, gay colored baskets, and hanks of woollen yarn, destined for the early fairs of the large towns of Burgundy or the Nièvre.

The drivers were pleasant and sociable fellows, and always ready to give Thérèse and her little

daughter a lift, and to relieve Jean and his son of their burden of household goods. When the high road left the river, and the loggers must needs scramble along the rocky banks, they would carry Thérèse and Ernestine to the next point of meeting, and many a pleasant mid-day halt they shared with these kindly friends under the shade of some old oak, while the oxen slowly munched their food. Or again, walking along together, the family would come at evening to a camp of men and oxen grouped about a fire in some wild place under a grove of giant chestnuts, the firelight playing strangely upon the white oxen and the sun-bronzed men, and would be invited to halt and pass the night in good company.

All these weeks since his discharge Jean had kept his resolution as to drinking, and at first he had found it easy—so easy indeed that he had begun to wonder why it had ever been hard. In that water-drinking district there had been no temptation to counteract the habit of abstinence acquired in the prison. But when in the early part of their journey they reached Montsauche, a town of some fifteen hundred inhabitants, with an inn where wine and other beverages could be procured, the old appetite awoke, and a fierce struggle began in Jean's breast. Primitive as is the little town it has outgrown the hospitable habits of the country side, and the best shelter available for the family was the hay loft of the inn; and Jean approached the door in a conflict of dread and desire such as he had

not known for many a week, and which, had Thérèse known of it, would have seemed the death knell of her newly found content.

The evening had already closed in, and as Jean opened the door of the inn kitchen he saw a group of men gathered, not around the table as would have seemed natural, but around a man who stood beside it, holding a book in his hand and with a wallet of books lying beside him upon the table. He was speaking earnestly, and Jean and George soon perceived that he was talking about the love of God, and urging his hearers to buy the little books which would tell them all about it. At the same moment father and son recognized the colporteur Caroff, whom they had seen on the *Bon Berger*.

At the recognition a strange tumult arose in Jean's soul. The craving for drink which was already upon him grew fiercer. Jean had never heard of the Apostle Paul, but at that moment he might have adopted his words, so strongly did his flesh cry out for indulgence, so intensely did his mind impel him to resist. It was with difficulty that he could refrain from calling for a glass of absinthe, yet it was impossible that he should turn away from this man who might perhaps help him. He was speaking now of sin, and how it separated man from God, and closed to him the door of heaven. Jean felt no interest in heaven, nor was he troubled by a sense of sin. In this he was precisely like the other men around the speaker, and Caroff was quick

to feel the want of response. Suddenly he changed his subject and began to speak of the practical evils of drunkenness and immorality.

"They make your home a hell," he said, "unfit you for the next day's work, rob your children of food and clothes and your wife of happiness. Now be honest, men, is it not so?"

Some of them shuffled uneasily, others murmured something almost inaudible, but Jean spoke up bravely, "Yes, that is so," and one or two joined with him.

"And have you ever tried to resist this temptation to rob your family of their rights?"

Again there were movements of embarrassment, but one man said, "What's the use? It is stronger than we."

"Yes," exclaimed Caroff, "it is stronger than you; but there is one who is stronger than *it*. Try in your own strength to overcome the habit, and your heart is a scene of hellish conflict in which at last you are beaten. Is it not so?" He looked slowly over the group before him until his eye rested upon Jean's face in the background, white with inward conflict.

"Happy is the man who knows that it is so," Caroff went on, "the man who has tried, who is trying to overcome the habit of drink For though his own strength is not sufficient there is a strength upon which he may depend. Jesus Christ, our Saviour, promises grace to all who call upon him. If you have failed before, if you are in danger of

failing now, call upon him for strength to win the victory. He will give it to you; he is your brother as well as your Saviour and your God. He knows the heart of a man; he calls to you, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.' Take him for your strong brother and Saviour and the victory will be yours."

There were murmurs of approval among the audience, but Jean, greatly moved, turned away. A little later while he and his family were eating their evening meal in a corner of the inn yard, Caroff joined them, and accepting a bit of bread and cheese from Thérèse entered into conversation. The interest already awakened by the expression he had caught on Jean's face became heightened by the discovery that this was the family of which Mr. Pipotin had talked with him, and soon the two men were pacing the quiet path along the riverside while Jean told Caroff the whole story of his struggles and his falls, and learned from him the way of salvation from even such an imperious sin as his. The two men knelt long in prayer behind a clump of bushes near the deserted path, and when they arose from their knees it was to Jean as to Christian when he saw the cross of Christ; his burden had rolled away, never to be felt again.

The days that followed were days of new life to Jean. Caroff, who was making his slow way to Vésy, where a fortnight later he was to be married to Henriette Tréville, cast in his lot with the Poêles as far as their roads were the same, and as he passed

along, speaking the words of truth and hope to those whom they met, talking with the drivers who gave Thérèse and Ernestine a lift, and with the groups around the door of the cabaret in the evenings, the light in Jean's heart grew ever brighter. George, too, learned better to understand the Friend whom once he had so ignorantly trusted, and even Thérèse found herself thinking sometimes with gratitude of that Jesus, who, though he had not opened Ernestine's eyes, had so entered Jean's heart that life was a different thing for them all. So they passed along through the enchanting region of the lower Cure; past Pierre Perthuis with its arched bridges marvellously reflected in the mirror-like reach of the crystal river, past Chastelleux with its noble castle splendidly preserved through many centuries, through quaint little Saint Père village with its unique middle age church, the "mother" of the ancient cathedral of Vezelay on its wide horizoned hill, and so along the valley to where the Cure loses itself in the Yonne. There the peaceful seclusion of the valley was lost in the broad publicity of the intervale, and the hurry and noise and bustle of the raft making.

CHAPTER XX

It was a lovely morning in early May when the accommodation train from Montargis stopped at a wayside *Halte* and a large party alighted from the third class cars to be received literally with open arms by Mr. Tréville, who stood resplendent in a well-starched shirt with gold studs flashing in the sunshine. No doubt the vast expanse of whiteness would eventually be covered with a brand new coat; but on a wedding morning there is much to do, and coats—especially new coats—are much in the way. So there he stood, in shirt sleeves and a beaming smile, to receive the relatives and friends who had come to Henriette's wedding, and whom a sympathetic railway company, in view of their numbers, had permitted to get off at the road crossing nearest to the farm, instead of eight miles farther on, at the station.

The company was a merry and a motley one; there was an aunt with a huge basket, a cousin with a bandbox, numerous relatives, male and female, with pasteboard boxes of various sizes, but all containing wedding finery; there was Pastor de Félice of historic fame, carrying a black bag which needed no label to show that it contained the pastoral gown and bands, there were Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin with Anna and Clarice. Hearty and vociferous were the greetings. Tréville kissed the aunt

on both cheeks, the female cousins on the forehead, and received the male cousins into his extended arms; then gathered up Anna and Clarice at once into a hug that greatly demoralized the huge white cravat of which until that moment he had been painfully conscious. Only after thus relieving his emotions was he able to extend a welcome somewhat less expansive to Nicolas and Bellah, and a greeting of suitable dignity to the celebrated historian, who because of a remote relationship with Henriette's grandmother, and an interest in the girl herself, awakened by the story of her conversion as told him by Caroff, with whom he as President of the Bible Society had come into contact, had gladly consented to perform the marriage ceremony.

They passed through fields waving with early corn, by a farm road lined with blossoming apple trees, the air perfumed with flowers, the larks singing overhead. The sun was as warm in Tréville's heart as overhead in the sky; joyful that his beloved daughter was about to be married to a good man, doubly joyful because this good man was already held in honor by the society which employed him, whose president was about to officiate at his wedding. Somewhat ill at ease in the near presence of so great a personage, though a relative by marriage, the worthy farmer found relief to his feelings in a wayside frolic with the children, pelting them with apple blossoms, which in the exuberance of embarrassed joy he unthriftily broke from the lower branches of the overhanging trees.

The doors of a great barn stood hospitably open ; its floor was covered with a thick layer of new sand, the walls were decorated with green boughs, and a long table down the centre was bright with flowers. At the door stood Caroff, deeply gratified by the presence of his President, glad to see Nicolas and Bellah, and submissive under the embraces and good wishes of the new relatives.

"You must come in and see Henriette," whispered Tréville to Bellah, while these ceremonies were taking place.

So they passed through the ample farm kitchen, where busy hands were preparing the wedding feast, to a small parlor. Here the bride stood meekly in the centre, while a group of girls from neighboring farms discussed how she should wear her veil. One who had seen a Paris wedding wanted it thrown all over the head, to hang down in front. "What!" exclaimed the others, "hide her face, and the children all waiting to see her at the door, and the village lining the streets to see her pass!"

Bellah was appealed to, as one of wide experience, and at her suggestion local custom was obeyed, and the veil was flung back. With no little bustle and laughter the procession was marshalled by Henriette's stalwart brothers, the father, having been hurried into his coat, took the bride upon his arm, Caroff gave his to the bridesmaid, friends and relatives got into line, and down the village street they went, the admired of all admirers, to the office of the Mayor.

Here there was a long pause, for the signing of papers is not to be treated lightly. Meanwhile the bridesmaid ran back to the farm to fetch the wedding ring, which Henriette's brother mysteriously whispered to her would be wanted, and one of the cousins took up a contribution of hairpins among the ladies, to rearrange the refractory veil. Then the Mayor put the few necessary questions, and in the name of the law pronounced the happy pair man and wife.

To the surprise of nearly every one present an act of toleration followed which none of them had ever dreamed they should witness in a *mairie*. For it, as the bride and groom well understood, they had to thank the *Bon Berger* and its visit of the previous autumn, with the meetings which ever since Tréville had held in his kitchen. For now the Mayor vacated his seat and removed his badge of office, the secretary took away the code of the law, and laid in its place a Bible, handed him by one of Henriette's brothers, and Pastor de Félice, in full canonicals of Geneva gown and bands, was invited to occupy the august chair of the representative of the French Government. The pastor made a pleasant allusion to the graceful act of toleration as he began his wedding exordium, calling it Mr. Mayor's new edict of Nantes, whereby the civil and the religious law had found place under the same roof, each to do its own proper work.

So the two were made one according to the laws of Church as well as state, and the procession hav-

ing been again formed, with due regard to precedence, the bride and groom walked through the village street, the villagers nodding and smiling at the bride, and the children crowding around her like a body guard.

The procession ended at the barn with the sanded floor, and the large party sat down at table. All except the happy father, who having disappeared soon reappeared, without his coat again, and adorned with a large blue apron.

"Sit down, sit down!" they all cried, but he, laughing, answered, "No, I am going to serve at my girl's wedding breakfast." He bustled about, directing the maids, laughing in the gladness of his heart, and at times breaking into song, as he poured the wine for his guests.

Every one was light hearted; they drank the bride's health, the men made speeches, the girls hardly needed to be pressed to sing a verse of a merry song. "Now it's the bride's turn," cried somebody. "Sing us a song, Henriette."

"What shall I sing?" she asked, blushing.

"Sing 'Liberty,'" cried the bridesmaid.

"But she has just promised to serve," suggested Nicolas, smiling.

"Oh, well," retorted a cousin, "love makes that yoke easy."

A shade of high resolve passed over Henriette's face. She turned to Bellah, and asked softly, "Shall I sing a hymn?" Bellah nodded, and with blushing dignity the bride of an hour rose and sang

the hymn much loved by converts of the Mission Boat :

"Sur Toi je me repose,
O Jésus mon Sauveur."*

She sang it all through, her husband joining in the chorus, and with him, one by one, those present who had learned it during the winter. To Bellah and Nicolas there was something inexpressibly pathetic in this public profession of Henriette's faith, among her own people, as she was about to leave them to go with her husband. She stood there all in white, crowned with orange blossoms, utterly forgetful of herself, and few eyes were wholly dry as she sang :

Moi-même en sacrifice,
Immolé désormais ;
Seigneur à ton service
Me voici pour jamais.†

So the gay wedding feast ended in a serious vein which was far from sad. Henriette went into the house to change her dress, and the guests broke up into groups. Nicolas and Bellah with Caroff were saying a last word to M. de Félice when a light cart drove rapidly into the yard, and a young woman jumped out and ran into the house.

"Mlle Chardonnet!" exclaimed Tréville. "She is here in time after all. She feared her school would detain her until too late for a word with Henriette."

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*An adaptation of "Safe in the Arms of Jesus," by Pastor Theodore Monod.

† *Myself* a sacrifice,
Henceforward given to thee ;
Saviour for Thy service,
Evermore take thou me.

"Mlle Chardonnet!" repeated Bellah. "Was that Father Chardonnet's sister? Is she not at Montargis still?"

"Have you not heard?" asked Tréville. "The priest got himself into trouble with his nonsense about your boat, and he was lately sent to bury himself in some unknown country village. And as to Mlle Lucie, I can't precisely say how it came about; but at Easter she gave up her school in Montargis, voluntarily or otherwise, and took a little school in the next commune to this—a poor little school, not at all worthy of her fine talents, Henriette says."

"I did not know that Henriette was acquainted with her," observed Bellah.

"Mlle Chardonnet was a sort of *externe* teacher in the convent school where my girl went—taught some branches the sisters were not equal to, for she is a great scholar, and Mlle Chardonnet took a fancy to my girl, and Henriette has loved her ever since."

They were interrupted by the re-appearance of the bride bonneted and ready. She was holding Mlle Chardonnet by the hand, and the eyes of both were wet.

"What!" exclaimed the father, "tears on your wedding day, Henriette? That will never do."

"Surely," said Mlle Chardonnet, with a grave smile, "you permit me to sorrow at losing my one friend? And why should she not feel a little emotion at parting from so kind a father?"

Tréville took his daughter in his arms and gave her two resounding kisses, then lifting her into the dog-cart which stood ready, he cried to Caroff,

"In with you, my lad. Don't give her time for any more tears."

Caroff sprang into the cart, the friends crowded around, and amid good-byes and good wishes the young couple soon disappeared from sight.

As Bellah turned from looking after them she saw Mlle Chardonnet at her side. The schoolmistress half held out her hand, hesitated, and drew it back.

"I am glad to see you again," said Bellah gently. "Permit me to say how sorry I am to learn that your brother has been called to suffer for his zeal for what he deemed his duty."

"He is willing to suffer for the right, Madame," the sister answered with a ring of pride in her low voice, "and I—I am almost willing—" A smile more pathetic than tears passed across her face, she checked herself and began again. "I am sure that you speak truly, Madame, and in kindness when you say that you are sorry."

"I do, indeed," replied Bellah, but the schoolmistress, with a gesture of farewell turned for a word with Henriette's father, and a few moments later drove away.

At the urgent request of the people of Chatillon, Nicolas had promised to spend the night and hold a meeting there, and as in the old time the friends from Vésy proposed to attend. They all went over

when evening came, Henriette's youngest brother driving the little girls in the donkey cart and the others walking. As they went, Tréville spoke to Nicolas and Bellah about Mlle Chardonnet, with whom, he said, Henriette had had many conversations with regard to the boat, and the religious questions connected with its work.

"Naturally she is strongly opposed," he said, "and no wonder. Her heart is bound up in her brother. Nevertheless Henriette thinks that some things she has said to her have had their effect, and if you were to be here for a week I should not be surprised to see her at the meetings, before the week was up."

CHAPTER XXI

BELLAH half hoped to see Mlle Chardonnet at the meeting in Chatillon, but in vain. The welcome she and Nicolas received, however, soon drove all other thoughts out of her mind. As they walked over from Vésy they had seen groups of people coming from all directions in carts or on foot, and many little companies coming up from the river-side, having arrived by boat. The whole village was in the streets, with the exception of the hostess of the Grace of God, who having prepared her best room for the honored guests announced her intention of remaining at home to take care of Mrs. Pipotin's tired little daughters.

No one seemed more rejoiced to see Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin than Robin Arnaud, who met them as they came out from the inn. With him was a dark-eyed, gypsy looking girl, whom Robin introduced as his wife, explaining that her people had been good to him during an illness which had attacked him in the winter, as he was walking across the country in search of work. As he spoke, Bellah noticed that he was white and thin, with a hectic flush, and now and then a slight cough.

"I am sure Mrs. Arnaud takes good care of you," she said lightly, as they walked together, Mr. Pipotin having been drawn away by others.

The gypsy girl flashed a look of comprehension upon her.

"I tell him that it is better for his health that he should live as we do, Madame, sleeping in the open air, and not taxing himself with hard work," she said.

Robin laughed. "And I ask her, Madame, when I was ever anywhere else but in the open air, except for a few hours in the night. And as for hard work," he looked serious again, "all I ask is that before haying time comes around I may have the strength of a year ago."

Bellah looked at him wistfully. She remembered that the year before he had proudly led haymakers and harvesters, and the change in his appearance saddened her.

Robin saw the pained expression, and misinterpreted it. "Don't be afraid, Mrs. Pipotin," he said eagerly, "it isn't *that*. I have kept my pledge. And do you know it has been a real help to me, being with *her* people. They never drink, you know."

A flush of deep gratification dyed the gypsy girl's dark cheek. That she was proud of her husband as well as fond of him was very plain.

"But you see," Robin went on, "everything has been against me all my life, and it proves that I really have a very strong constitution and shall soon be well again. For you know I never had a home, and after I came out of the Brothers' School I fell in with a wild lot—anarchists and such—and

when we were through work we would drink and make speeches till all hours of the night. But since Mr. Pipotin and you took me in, that has all been different. This illness is only what I deserved long ago, and as soon as I get well I shall be stronger than ever before."

Bellah had been too deeply interested to observe in what direction they were walking, and now to her surprise she found herself in the park. For the service was to be held in an unused building on the Coligny estate, which the present owner, M. de Marsange, had offered for the purpose; and both he and Mme de Marsange were there to welcome them and to attend the service. Hardly less gratifying was the presence of the parish priest, who had shown himself of so catholic a spirit when Bellah had met him in the inn parlor on the day of her first arrival at Chatillon. It appeared that although he had attended none of the meetings on the boat, he had been much impressed by the influence there exerted in the matter of temperance, a subject of which he felt the importance. And having gone into the matter quite at length with M. de Marsange, the latter had decided, when spring came round, to put his unoccupied building at the service of the priest for popular temperance meetings of a religious character. Learning that Mr. Pipotin was soon to be in the neighborhood they had decided to ask him to conduct the first meeting, and especially to put them in the way of procuring a number of the Mission hymn books, the *Cantiques Populaires*,

which they foresaw would be essential to the animation and interest of the temperance meetings.

So unexpected a turn of affairs was a joy to Nicolas and Bellah, and they entered heartily into the plans of M. and Mme de Marsange and the priest, particularly gratified to find that the good abbé fully recognized that the only hope of a thorough and lasting temperance work was in bringing its subjects to a genuine change of heart.

"By the way," said Tréville, as they walked away in the moonlight, after the meeting; "you have never heard of our friend the anarchist, I suppose, since we last saw him on his omnibus on the village green at Vésy."

Nicolas told of their interview at Clamecy, and of the service Bonnet had rendered him at the time of the flood.

"And after—" asked Tréville.

"After that I never saw him again. When I had time to look him up, he had gone, omnibus, family and all; going southward, I was told, preaching anarchy and the destruction of property as he went."

"Do you remember saying what a good man he would be when he was converted?" asked Tréville. "You have given up that hope by this time, no doubt."

"By no means," replied Nicolas. "It is quite possible that I may never know of it, but I still believe that God has a work for that man to do."

Under the same May moon, far away in the South, Bonnet the anarchist was standing upon a bridge

that spanned the rapid little river Gardon, plunged in profound and troubled thought. On all sides of him rose the mountains of the Cevennes, terraced to their tops with rough stone walls to make room for the great chestnut trees which form the subsistence of the people. On the narrow level between mountain and river lay the picturesque and storied little city, St. Jean-du-Gard, still called "the holiest town in France," rich in the memory of saints and martyrs, and hardly less sacred than in the olden time for the self-sacrificing piety of its citizens to-day.

Bonnet stood long in thought, for his soul was troubled. The past months had been in the main a time of satisfaction. Dragging his omnibus from town to town aided by his wife and sometimes by the puny strength of his children, barely supporting himself and them by peddling small wares at the farms or in the lesser villages, he had yet been proud and happy; for everywhere, at wayside crosses, in village alehouses and city clubs, his eloquence had drawn crowds around him, and he had been exhilirated, carried out of himself, with the proud conviction that he, Bonnet the anarchist, was doing much to bring about a new era when there should be neither poverty nor private property, when every man should have enough, and no man should deem himself better than his neighbor. So he had come to St. Jean and had spoken with all his usual eloquence in the public place between the *Mairie* and the temple. A pastor had once been broken on the wheel, just where he stood, some

one had told him; a girl had been flogged before that temple door, they said; and all because the one would not give up his religion nor the other betray the teacher who had taught her the way of life. And still these people believed in religion, though religion permitted cruelties like that; they were still loyal to the government, though governments countenanced injustices like that—nay, were not women and young girls at that very hour scalding their fingers in boiling water, spinning silk for a mere pittance, that their employers might grow rich? He had never felt more eloquent than when he stood in that place of witnessing and proclaimed his doctrine of equality; neither God nor master.

It was none of these things that troubled him as he stood in the moonlight on the bridge and watched the twinkling lights go out one by one in the little city under the mountain. It was the thought of a beautiful woman, who after all was over had followed him to his wretched omnibus home on the outskirts of the city. A beautiful woman, a lady, refined and gentle, yet fragile—not long for this world, that was plain. She had given him her soft white hand—how thin and transparent it was—and had said in her low ringing voice, "I see that you are a soldier in the great cause of humanity; this poor home of yours shows what you are willing to suffer for the cause that you deem just. And I have come to give you the right hand of fellowship, for I too am a socialist. I am sad when I see the poor man suffer and the rich neglect him, sad be-

cause the rich man is cruelly selfish and also because the poor is full of hatred and covets the wealth of another. But do you think that dynamite or fire will make the rich or the poor kind and unselfish? Only love makes men equal, the rich and the poor. I have a little book here that I wish you would read; it explains the principles of socialism as I understand them."

She had put a tiny book into his hand, and had gone away—slowly and hesitatingly, Bonnet noticed, as if her strength were exhausted. And he, opening her little book, had begun to read, and had read, entranced, to the end. It began with the word "Blessed." "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of God." "Blessed are the meek—the merciful—the pure in heart." And a little farther, "Love thy neighbor as thyself," and still farther, "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you . . . for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."

A great amazement took possession of him. Here indeed was equality—the social unity which he had sought, here, right in the world about him—God's world, if this little book said true. And he had not believed that there was a God!

He rose from his seat when the darkness closed in, after he had read the little book through twice. Unheeding his wife's summons to supper he walked away, under the hills, crossing the bridge and climbing the opposite mountain by the zig-zag ter-

raced road. Yes, there was a world where all were equal and were treated equally, the good and the evil, the just and the unjust, and it was not some new world, or some far off, hoped for new order, it was here and now, this world—God's world! His thoughts could go no farther; for hours he had been going over and over this amazing thought, the equality of things in God's world.

It was still with him when, having retraced his steps, he stood still upon the bridge looking at the stars reflected in the river. A step sounded on the bridge, and a young man came toward him. Late as it was, all the little town asleep, in the broad light of the full moon Bonnet recognized him—one of the two young men who had helped to put down the disturbance on the boat at Montargis. Réné Clerino did not recognize Bonnet, however. He came up to him and asked, in a low voice, "You are the man to whom my sister spoke to-day—and gave you a little book?"

Bonnet assented.

"She is very ill—perhaps you noticed that she was not strong—and the walk was rather much for her. But she could not rest until I promised to find you and tell you that though she might not see you again, she counts upon your becoming such a socialist as she is, a socialist after the manner of that little book; and that she feels sure that when you have accepted these doctrines you will not cease to be as self-denying for the sake of your fellow men as you are now. I am glad I found you," he

added, after a moment's pause, in which Bonnet had not spoken. "I shall tell her that you are seriously considering?" his eye fell upon the little book which, unconsciously, Bonnet was still carrying in his hand. Bonnet bowed gravely, and with some difficulty uttered the words,

"Tell her I thank her."

CHAPTER XXII

The bell at the garden door of the Manor house jangled sharply ; then there was silence. From the riverside where the women were washing came the irregular click-clack of spatulas, dulled by distance; overhead the swallows twittered faintly in the remote blue, a gentle breeze rustled the vines upon the wall. A soft step sounded upon the gravel within, a key turned and the door opened a few inches.

"Might one enter?" asked Father Chardonnet, half doubtfully. Village gossip supplementing Mme Vaillant's information had awakened doubts of the sincerity of the invitation he had received from the lady of the manor.

"But certainly, M. le curé," replied Mme Languard. "You are welcome, indeed." She held out her little, work-worn hand, and stopped to lock the door before leading the way to the manor house.

They went by a neglected gravel walk between grass plots where weeds grew rampant, and under trees sadly in need of pruning. Here and there were untended flower beds; the vista of a diverging alley showed a mutilated statue; at the intersection was a dry fountain, its basin choked with rubbish. Mme Languard made no allusion to these things; she was thanking Father Chardonnet for not hav-

ing forgotten his promise to call. "Your predecessor never found it worth while," she added.

"Not worth while!" repeated the priest.

A faint smile crossed Mme Languard's pale face. "Perhaps Father Chardonnet will be of the same opinion," she said, sadly, "when he learns that we—are free thinkers."

"Free thinkers!" ejaculated the priest: "you?"

"I—and my husband. As for my poor daughter—if your religion can give her comfort, can calm her disturbed mind, M. le curé, I do not ask that what you teach her shall be true. I only ask that it shall be efficacious."

She led the way up a flight of steps to an ill-kept terrace, where, however, there was some evidence of an attempt at order. A basket and pruning shears lay on the grass; where the flowers grew most rank there were sticks and some bits of string, and a pair of ragged gloves thrown down beside them told the priest that Mme Languard had herself been gardening before answering the bell. A peacock strutted on the terrace, his tail spread for the admiration of an infirm man who sat in a wheel chair in the sun. On the steps before the front door lounged a young lady, negligently yet richly dressed, and with a restless look in her eyes which recalled to Father Chardonnet's mind the landlady's remark that some people thought the young Marquise insane.

A great pity swept over the priest's heart as he looked at the frail little woman, refined and toil-

worn, who stood beside him amidst the ruin of former grandeur and the wreck of former hopes. She a free thinker! Passionately he longed to bring to her the consolations of religion, never more sorely needed, he believed, than by one in her situation; but how was he to begin? The inadequacy of his own experience, and of religion as he knew it, to meet realities like these paralyzed him.

He was recalled to himself by a cackling laugh from the lord of the manor—a laugh in which the sneer was the more exasperating from its utter impotence.

"He! he! Mr. Priest! How found you your way hither? Your predecessor never came, why should he? He did not need me to tell him that his religion was a sham, a device of astute popes and prelates to defraud men and lead astray silly women. He knew too well what he was about! But you—you are still an innocent. Have you come that I should enlighten you? He! he! he!"

His voice died away in weakness, and Father Chardonnet, indignant at the slur upon what was to him most holy, was about to protest when the young woman sprang up, and making one bound toward him, clutched him by the sleeve.

"Tell me that is true!" she exclaimed, excitedly; "tell me that death does not end all—that I shall have my baby again, and that from the ramparts of heaven I may watch the Marquis burning in hell forever and ever! Tell me there is a God of justice!" Fragile though she was she shook the

stalwart priest to and fro in the intensity of her passion.

Amazed and horrified, Father Chardonnet found no words to answer. But the mother had already come to his relief. Gently, yet with a motion of authority, she unclasped her daughter's hands from their fierce grip of the priest's arm, and putting her arm around her led her away—the old man looking after them with a mocking smile.

"It will be long before he gives her justice, that God of yours," he observed, sardonically. "And yet what that poor creature has suffered would move even him to show his wrath—if he existed. No, M. le curé," he added, more seriously than he had yet spoken, "it is many years since reading and reflection convinced me that God does not exist and that religion is a self-interested fraud. But if I had not arrived at that conclusion by the exercise of reason, the experiences of that poor child would have brought me to it."

Father Chardonnet's mind passed rapidly in review the stock teachings with which he was wont to confront the calamities of others, but no words came to his succor. In the face of a situation like this the consolations of religion as he knew it seemed almost ludicrously inadequate. He murmured some words of sympathy, and was greatly relieved to see Mme Languard returning.

"It is near the hour of your evening service," she observed courteously, with no allusion by word or sign to the painful scene of a few minutes earlier.

"Let me show you the path; simple as it seems it is quite possible to lose one's way between here and the garden door."

As they walked along she remarked that Mme Vaillant had told her that vespers were now said in the church every afternoon. "And do the people come?" she asked.

"Alas, no," replied Father Chardonnet. "The influence of a free thinking priest, such as my predecessor doubtless was, is not to be at once overcome. Thus far there has been only one man at service except the sexton, and even of the women very few. Our good friend Mme Vaillant, my hostess, is the most faithful among them."

"Would it not be to the purpose to consider that this is a very busy season of the year, that the men, and the women too, are in the fields from dawn to dark, and that if there were a God he would be better pleased to see folk at work providing for their families, than kneeling idly before him repeating prayers they do not understand for gifts to which they attach no value?"

"On the contrary," replied the priest somewhat stiffly, "work is useless without the blessing of God, and that can only be hoped for where his name is hallowed. The people of this village are doltish, groveling, materialistic. Far from refraining to ask them to attend an occasional service I am about to establish a Perpetual Adoration, in the hope of winning for these ignorant people a special blessing." Displeased though he was by the views

of the lady of the Manor he yet spoke gently, deferentially. The pity of what he had lately seen still thrilled him.

There was pity too in the expression with which Mme Languard regarded the priest as she turned the key in the lock of the garden door.

"You still believe it, I see," she said gently. "Ah, well, it is better so—if only it could last. But since you still believe, will you not come to my poor daughter sometimes? Things are not always as bad as to-day—with either of them," she added under her breath.

Touched to the heart, the priest replied that he would come again. "And you will not be displeased Madame, if I also include your name in my prayers?" he added.

She looked at him wistfully. "It is much," she said, "to know of any who think kindly of one." She held the door open, and the priest went away.

The vesper bell was jangling and he went up the hill. In the churchyard, among the old grave stones, walked two or three women, Mme Vaillant among them.

"It has come, my father," she said eagerly. "That is why only we are here. The others are all going to the boat this evening. And the men too," she added.

Inwardly Father Chardonnet gnashed his teeth, but he was able to say calmly, "The more need for the prayers of the faithful." And the three women followed him into the church.

The service was over, the women were gone, and still the priest knelt in prayer. When he arose from his knees the late summer twilight was closing in. The village was strangely still as he went down the hill, the usual clatter of sabots on the cobbles of the streets was silenced; by the riverside was a dotted line of light—he knew what it meant. He closed his ears to the sound of singing as he walked through the deserted streets; then as the words forced themselves upon his notice he turned impatiently and retraced his steps through the deserted village, under the bluff where his church stood up against the lingering twilight, and so at last along the towpath going up the river. He must get out of hearing of that boat, for it behooved him to think.

A feeble glimmer was reflected in the water a little ahead, there was a faint plashing of water and a sound of voices, and Father Chardonnet could make out the outline of a raft, with a tent upon it, dragged by a woman and boy harnessed tandem. A man at the stern was carefully keeping the unwieldy craft off the shore.

"I think we might stop here," said the woman with a weary sigh, and the boy lifted up his voice: "Is this a good place, father?"

"Good enough," replied the man from the raft, holding up the lantern and peering around.

"That dark mass just ahead must be the village, and just look, George! that row of lights along the riverside. We have overtaken the boat at last, I

do believe. Help me to make fast, my boy. Your mother can rest in the tent with Ernestine and you and I will go and hear some of those good words again. You are not too tired?"

"Too tired to go to that boat?" the boy's voice rang out cheerfully. "I think I shall never be as tired as that. Hurry, father, or we shall be too late."

The priest turned and struck across the meadow —trespassing, if he had thought of it.

He had recognized the man as he shifted the lantern; he even remembered the names, George, Ernestine, often repeated to him by his sister. So here was the precise situation repeated, though with a difference. Now for more firmness, more discretion if need be, for the wisdom that comes from experience. It could not be that God and the saints would again refuse to aid him in this struggle for the church against her deadliest foes.

CHAPTER XXIII

For weeks Touillier had been detained in Paris, while with all his heart he longed to hasten away—to the South and to Herriedd. There were weary forms and details relative to his release from his head-mastership, and when these were done with, the malady in his eyes suddenly developed new features, and for a time he was in the oculist's hands. It was the middle of May when at last he was free, and the same evening saw him at the Lyons Railway station taking the train for Clermont Ferrand and the Cevennes.

During all these weeks he had not written to Herriedd. Keenly as he felt his obligation to tell her of the change through which he had passed, he yet could not deny himself the happiness of looking into her dear eyes while he told his story, of seeing the flash of human joy light up that heavenly calm with which they had last looked into his. So he had pledged Bellah to secrecy, when after leaving George and his family at Guegnon he had gone to Clamecy, told her his story, learned of Herriedd's welfare, and secured Bellah's promise to keep him informed as to her sister's movements.

It had long been Herriedd's wish to visit the scenes most celebrated in the history of the Huguenots, and after spending the winter in the old home of their family in a warm valley of Vaucluse, she

and Réné had crossed the Rhone, and entering the Cevennes by that magnificent mountain gateway through which the Gardon issues into the plain at Anduze, they had spent several weeks in driving by easy stages from one to another point celebrated in the sad story of French Protestantism.

St. Jean-du-Gard, where the holiness of martyrdom still lingers, Pont de Montvert, where the fierce revolt from persecution broke out in the Camisard war, wild forest fastnesses where at peril of their lives the hunted Protestants used to assemble for the "Desert meetings," by which their faith and fortitude were nurtured—hillside caves where pastors were hidden upon whose head a price had been set—one by one they had visited these scenes of brave and pathetic memory.

At last accounts they had reached Florac, in the very heart of the *Causse* country; and leaving the train at the little mountain station, Ste Cécile d'Andorge, Touillier took a seat beside the driver of the old-fashioned lumbering diligence for a twenty-five mile drive. It led along that noble mountain road which follows up the head waters of the river Gard and climbs the divide to the source of the Tarn, and so follows along the precipice hundreds of feet above the stream to the little metropolis hidden away in the circle of the hills. The magnificent sweeps of the mountain road, its splendid viaducts, its daring solutions of difficulties, the superb views of valley and crag, of ruined castle and antique village, were only minor elements in the interest of

the journey. The schoolmaster was familiar with the history of his country, and it was with a peculiar thrill of sympathy, born of his new-found faith, that he recalled to mind that here in this secluded valley men and women, yes and children, had been subjected to outrage and to torture in the name of religion; that above, on the level tablelands of the *Causses*, they had been hunted like wild beasts. He knew enough of the physical geography of his country to understand that these corrugated crags which stood up against the sky were a lasting witness of the revenge of time upon the wasteful cruelty of an absolute monarch and a reckless people. Rich forests, the wealth of the nation, had once waved upon those high tablelands, but at command of "the Sun King" they had been leveled for hundreds of square miles, that the favorite pastime of the court, the *chasse aux Huguenots*, might the more merrily go forward; and nature and the centuries had taken their revenge. For the soil had all been washed away, and the soft limestone mass on which it rested had become corrugated and worn, and that vast region was forever given over to barrenness and sterility. As they were descending into Florac the driver, himself a son of the Huguenots, pointed out to Touillier a singular group of castellated rocks upon the skyline of the precipitous mountain. "The Rocks of the Camisards," folk called them, he said, because one time when the *chasse aux Huguenots* was at its merriest, a party of hiding Camisards being discovered by a body of dragoons

—the "booted missionaries" of Louis XIV.—each Camisard had clasped a dragoon by the waist and leaped over the precipice—to be dashed to pieces a thousand feet below.

The sun had dropped below the castellated rampart of the hills, and the pretty little city lay in the shadow as the diligence rattled along the narrow street and drew up with a great clatter at the door of the hotel. Among the lookers-on was Réné Clérino, for Bellah had written him of the schoolmaster's intended visit, asking him to prepare Herriedd, but carefully respecting the confidence Touillier had reposed in her.

It was impossible for Réné not to perceive that a great change had been wrought in this man whom he had once so blindly admired and then so bitterly hated; but they exchanged only the merest words of greeting, and at the door of Herriedd's room the brother turned away.

She was waiting for him, standing in the centre of the room, this woman from whom Touillier had parted ten years before. Already then she had passed beyond early girlhood, and now she was a woman nearing middle age; but to Touillier she seemed to have been translated into a state in which there is neither youth nor age. So ethereal she looked as she stood there, her transparent face slightly suffused with pink, her dark eyes shining like stars, her slender figure bent slightly as if it would follow her outstretched hands—she seemed to him like a pitying angel sent to lead him to those

high joys from which he had so resolutely turned away.

As on that day ten years ago when he had bidden her farewell, he went forward and kneeled at her feet, and as in that cruel moment of parting, she gently laid her hand upon his head. And then he sprang up and caught her in his arms, for Herriedd had swayed and would have fallen.

She smiled up into his face as he carried her to a reclining chair near the window. "I am not very strong," she said; then taking him by the hand as he stood beside her, she added: "Tell me all about it."

And he, again kneeling beside her, told her all the story, gazing into her eyes, and seeing there, as he had hoped, the light of human joy. Only there was mingled with it a radiance that seemed to be of heaven.

"I knew it would come, Clémençz," she said, when he had finished. "And of late I have seemed to know that it would come in time. I have been almost expecting you, Clémençz."

He knew what she meant, but for the moment it could not cloud his joy. It was enough to know that they were at last one in Christ, and that death itself could not divide them.

A few days of indescribable blessedness followed. They had hours of happy talk, and other hours when Herriedd was too weary for talk; it was happiness enough to sit together hand in hand. Sometimes Touillier read aloud, chiefly in the New

Testament, pausing at times for a word of comment or explanation from Herriedd. Occasionally she was strong enough for a walk, and then their talk was apt to be of the past heroic days, and the witness bearing of those to whom the love of Christ was more than life. Sometimes they would stop to rest in some friendly doorway, at the request of some man or woman to whose heart the dying woman made silent appeal; and then the talk would be of present religious conditions. The proportion of Protestants in Florac now was small, and the church still felt the depressing influence of generations of stern repression. They were told the word Protestant had rather a political than a religious significance; but though "the faithful" were almost without exception poor laboring folk, they gave generously to the support of their church. The richest man among them, the pastor said, a man with three children, who had never in his life earned three francs a day, gave regularly and promptly two hundred francs a year, and fifty members had subscribed eight thousand francs for the rebuilding of the church, which had lain in ruins since the days of the persecution.

And Herriedd looked at Touillier and whispered, "Some day our Mission must come here;" and Touillier pressed her hand, accepting thus his life work.

On Sunday morning Herriedd was unusually well and they went to church together. It was communion Sunday, and though he might not join with

her, Touillier sympathized with Herriedd's longing for this sacrament. It was a singular experience to the man who had never before been in a Protestant church, and not for many years in any place of worship; the homely provincial folk, the bare little hall, the quaint formality of the simple service, made a deep impression upon him.

On entering Herriedd had directed his attention to the communion table below the pulpit. It was a square table of ancient appearance, and across the front was cut in large letters

"Our fathers communed at this table."

It had been found, Herriedd whispered to him, amid the ruins of the old church; and this touch of the long past thrilled him strangely.

He was greatly moved again by one feature of the communion service, which was after an order which prevails only in this part of France. After the consecration of the elements the congregation joined in singing a hymn while two aged elders passed the bread and wine. As they went from seat to seat those who communed one by one bowed their heads, and so the strain gradually died away until only one voice was left. It was Herriedd's, for they were sitting in the back of the church. Tremulous and faint though it was, it seemed to Touillier as a voice from heaven.

CHAPTER XXIV

THAT afternoon Réné told Herriedd that the man to whom she had given the Sermon on the Mount at St. Jean was below asking to see her. Bonnet entered with the little Scripture portion in his hand, and with the merest word of greeting he said: "Madame, I have read many works of eloquence, but never in my life have I read such glorious sentences, never anything so sublime as this. With all my heart I thank you for giving me this book."

"And do you still teach anarchy?" asked Herriedd kindly.

"Madame, I am no longer an anarchist, for this book of yours shows me a better way, but I am still teaching socialism, for it also shows me that the good God is himself a socialist; that he treats no man with favor or with neglect, making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending his rain on the just and the unjust, bidding us all to love our neighbor as ourself. I am more a socialist than ever; but I am not satisfied with socialism as I know it; I want to be a socialist of your kind."

Herriedd smiled sympathetically. "Are you sure that you know what kind that is?" she asked.

"Yes madame, I mean the Protestant kind, and I will tell you why. After you were so good as to give me this book, a socialist came to me in trouble. He wanted 200 francs in order to enable his daughter

to pass an examination for which she was prepared. 'Well,' I said 'go to your Circle; among the brotherhood they will surely find you that money.' 'But I have been to them all,' he replied, 'and they all treated me as a beggar. Not one would lend me a sou.' 'So,' I said, 'we learn what socialism is good for as our brethren understand it. But didn't you tell me you were born a Protestant?' 'Yes,' he said, 'but that means nothing for I am an atheist.' 'Never mind,' I said, 'go and see the pastor.' 'Never,' he shouted, 'I hate him, and my wife insulted him only last week.' 'So much the better,' said I, 'for he is a socialist, too, but of this kind,' and I read from this book, '"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you."' There,' I said, 'you see you have a double claim upon him. This is what he reads in church; he will help you *because* you hate him and your wife insulted him.' He did not believe me, but he was desperate, so he went to the pastor, and the pastor at once went among his friends and borrowed the money, and my comrade's daughter has passed her examination. So now I want to belong to your Circle, the Protestant Circle of Socialists, and I have come to ask you to tell me more about it. There is more than justice in your socialism; there is something else. What is it?"

Herriedd took the New Testament from the table and opening it she read, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ever-

lasting life." Then handing him the book without a word she watched him as he read the verse over and over again.

At first he seemed bewildered, then his face lighted up with a flash of joy; then a deep awe overspread it and he said in a low voice, "His Son. I also have sons. But this is more than justice, more than love; it is self-sacrifice; it is the giving of *all*, of *everything*. Is it possible that God has done this?" his voice sank almost to a whisper.

"He has done this," said Herriedd softly.

"No!" exclaimed Bonnet springing to his feet. "I thought I loved my fellow men—society, that I was ready to sacrifice all that they might have justice. I see now that I did not know the first rudiments of love for man. No; there is only one service one can render his fellows! It is to make known to them the love of God!"

He stood for a moment as if entirely possessed by the thought. Then turning to Herriedd he said in a broken voice: "Madame, I can never be grateful enough to you—can never thank you for what you have done. But your God,"—he hesitated, "*my* God, will reward you."

Touillier followed him as he left the room, and walked with him a little way without speaking. Then he asked, "What do you propose to do now?"

"There is only one thing," Bonnet answered. "I have been traveling through the country lecturing on anarchy and socialism. I shall keep on travelling and lecturing, but it shall be on this book

only,'' showing the Sermon on the Mount. ''Can you tell me where I can purchase a number of copies of it for circulation? I have distributed many anarchistic tracts,'' he added. ''I should like to replace them with these.''

''Let me send you some,'' said Touillier. ''I should be glad to associate myself to that degree with your work;'' And having agreed upon the place where Bonnet was to receive them the men parted.

During these days Touillier and Herriedd had not discussed the future. Touillier saw only too clearly that Herriedd must soon die; he accepted it not more as the due sequence of his blind and obstinate selfishness—though that he perceived—than as the inevitable outcome of a life so unselfish, so Christ-filled, as for years Herriedd's had been. He knew that he had now given her the deepest joy possible from an earthly source, that the long desire of her heart was accomplished, and he could ask for nothing more.

It was Herriedd who first spoke of marriage. It was on that Sunday afternoon after she had partaken of the communion, while the light of that high privilege still illumined her wasted features. At the first word he had protested, but she had laid her hand upon his lips.

''I should like you to take care of me; to be close beside me as long as I am here,'' she said, and he could only kiss her hand in speechless gratitude.

And so Réné had sought the pastor, and as soon

as the needed formalities were over they were quietly married. It was arranged that Herriedd's darling wish, to make the little-known journey of the Tarn cañon, should be complied with, Réné joining them three days later at Millau; for they all knew now that the time must be very short.

In the sweet afternoon sunlight they drove away, this man and woman who had loved one another from childhood and who had only a few days to spend together. A large open carriage had been lent by the chief official of the little city, and the distance to Ste Enimie was short. Their road wound under the great chestnuts that bordered the rushing little river Tarn, high cliffs rising on either side with here and there an ancient ruin or a well preserved castle perched on an isolated pinnacle of rock.

At Ste Enimie, with its quaint little inn, and its tiny pilgrimage chapel of the patron saint high upon a ledge of the cliff, they spent the night, and then came the day that so long as Touillier lives will forever stand apart from all other experiences of his life, as the most perfect foretaste of heaven. The whole day long, from early sunrise till the moon hung in the narrow strip of blue above them, they were floating down the Tarn in a flat bottomed boat, shut away from the world by the precipitous walls of the narrow cañon. No malachite was ever so green, no crystal ever so clear as the water of that little river; no silence so soul-filling as the silence that enwrapped its solitude.

For hours together there would be no sound but the rippling of the water and the clatter of the boatmen's poles or the grating of the pebbles, as the boat sought her channel, now under the willows and poplars of a sheltered reach, now under the fantastic rocks and caves of the weather-worn precipice. It was a sacred loneliness, not sad, and full of rest. At times they spoke softly to one another, but in general they had no need of words.

Sometimes they would pass a cluster of cave dwellings high up in the rocks, and at long intervals they would come to a little village, with children playing on the waterside. Then would come a waterfall, or a series of rapids too shallow and strong for the boat to live in, and then Touillier would lift his wife and carry her in his arms down the short stretch to where another boat lay in the quiet water. At the longer portage of the *Pas de Soucie* there was a carriage, arranged for by Réné two days before; and after the half-mile drive the lovely journey began again, the silent river receiving them upon its bosom, and the towering rocks speaking strength to their hearts.

So they came before nightfall to Les Rosiers, with its conical hill piercing the sky; and the next day to Millau. And there Herriedd's life journey ended. For a few days they watched and tended her with all devotion, her husband, her brother, and the good pastor and his wife. They were days of extreme weakness, but not of much suffering, and they were soon over. At eventime, on the

second Sunday, a great light came into Herriedd's eyes; she stretched out her arms, and with the glad exclamation "My Lord and my God!" she passed away into the light that was still reflected upon her face. And her husband, remembering how ten years before she had told him what Christ had been to her during the hard months since her lover had deserted her, was comforted in the thought of the unutterable joy to which she had gone.

Her departure did not leave his life purposeless. He knew her wish, and when he had laid her away beside the little children of the good pastor and his wife, he turned his face toward Paris. In the mission halls where she had found comfort he would prepare to carry the Gospel along that other Silent Highway where the most sacredly happy day of his life was spent, and to the people among whom Herriedd lies asleep.

CHAPTER XXV

BELLAH PIPOTIN had not gone to her sister's death bed. Though Herriedd had been mother as well as sister to her in their early years of wandering and privation, though she had been the guide, counsellor, inspiration of her later life, Bellah would not subtract one moment from the sacred communion of husband and wife in the few precious days that were given them. So she declined Mrs. Brodart's offer to take charge of her children, and the suggestion of Loic and Henriette Caroff that they should help her husband with the boat work, and remained at her post, contenting herself with daily messages exchanged by means of her brother Réné.

The work at Clarsigny was indeed sufficiently arduous, and for a time somewhat discouraging. Not that Father Chardonnet's influence wrought against them; their contention was the same as his, against bald atheism and stolid indifference. The influence of a free thinking priest and of an atheistic lord of the manor had resulted in a low moral condition, a blank unconsciousness of any higher needs than those of the body, and a base indifference even to physical law. The men had wholly discontinued church attendance, many of the women had refused to go to confession and went rarely to church. As one of the villagers said to Mr. Pipotin,

"Our village has 600 inhabitants, of which 400

are declared Free Thinkers; the others are Catholics or neutrals. Out of fifty funerals that take place in the twin villages, thirty are buried without a priest, and the other twenty by the church to please our women folk.

"My father was buried without a priest by his own wish, and as the eldest son I could have buried my mother in like manner, but I engaged a priest so as to avoid giving pain to my sisters. Out of the entire male population of this village, there is one man only, Père Jacot, who attends mass; and the opposite village is worse than we are."

The children were indeed confirmed, for confirmation is a pageant in which the French heart rejoices. The girls would all be dressed in white like brides, and the boys, even the humblest, in full dress suits with a white band on the left arm edged with gold fringe, and thus they would parade the streets to the general admiration. But after their first communion the church of Clarsigny knew them no more. Not even on their wedding day, for marriages were performed by the civil authorities in the twin village across the river, on which Clarsigny was governmentally dependent.

Such was the village to which Father Chardonnet in his youthful zeal and untempered devotion had been sent to bury himself until he should learn discretion; such the village to which the no less zealous and devoted evangelists of the Mission boat had come with the glad tidings of an undesired and unappreciated salvation.

Each went in his own way about the work that lay before him. Discretion: yes, the young priest saw that it behooved him to cultivate that, especially when he learned that the *Bon Berger* was on its way to his parish; but that was not his real task as it presented itself to his mind. Here was holy Mother Church despised, neglected, sitting in sackcloth and ashes, abandoned of her children, and it should be his high achievement to restore her to her glory and her right, so far as lay in the power of a man whose brow had been anointed with the sacred chrism, and upon whose head power had been laid by the hand of a successor of the Apostles. The Perpetual Adoration which he established in the little church might indeed be kept up only by paid service, the sexton, the acolyte, a few youths who were willing for a consideration to kneel for a couple of hours and repeat unintelligible words of prayer; none the less the service would be a standing witness to the glory and the authority of the Church.

The night vigils were kept by the priest alone; little as he knew of human nature he was aware that such a duty might not be entrusted to official or paid service; and night after night saw him upon his knees before the altar, hour after hour repeating words of adoration or supplication, words of prayer which night after night grew more intense, more real, as the young priest wrestled for a blessing, the meaning of which was gradually dawning upon him through the weary hours of darkness.

For he had begun to perceive the need of something more than that the Church should be glorious and authoritative. That which months of humiliation and bitterness of spirit had failed to reveal to him had been daily shown him by his intercourse with Mme Languard and her much afflicted daughter, the Marquise. He saw that religion, if it is to exist, must be first of all a power in human life, a power exquisitely and perfectly adapted to meet every human need. Dimly and vaguely, indeed, he began to see that the Church exists for humanity, and not humanity for the Church; and in these nights of prayer he was not so much performing a service, very meet, right, and his bounden duty, such as with exultant heart he had in former days performed, as wrestling, groping, agonizing for a clearer view of his own function and office, for a more keen perception of the true meaning of religion, and for a new power to adapt its truths to those in need.

In these days he hardly took rest. After long nights of vigil he would throw himself upon his bed for a couple of hours of that half sleep in which for very exhaustion one cannot lose self-consciousness, and then rising would spend the day between the Church and the few parishioners to whom his ministrations were welcome. He went often to the manor house, for he saw that although at times his presence simply aggravated the trials under which Mme Languard was well-nigh crushed, yet at other times it was a help to her. M. Languard, when

not in too exasperated a mood, welcomed him as a means of communication with the outer world—unsatisfactory, indeed, as one utterly ignorant of the doings of "All Paris," but better than none.

The afflicted Marquise in her better moments brightened at his coming. She was a brilliant musician, and there were days when she would fain have played to him by the hour could he have remained so long. And when the dark mood swept over her she clung to him with a desperate grasp. Brought up in utter ignorance of religion, she yet turned to religion as her one hope both of solace and of revenge; and the most painful moments of the young priest's life were those when he was attempting to suit his faith to her need of solace, and win her heart from its craving for revenge.

Amid this pitiful group moved the lady of the manor, the most pathetic figure of the three; always at work, performing rough and menial tasks for which neither education nor physique had fitted her, enduring the brutalities of her husband, seeking to alleviate the mental agonies of her daughter, uncomplaining, unresting, with no time even for the solace of the young priest's tender devotion, except the few words they could exchange as she escorted him to and from the little door in the garden wall. For the sake of those few moments Father Chardonnet would have endured any privation; the sharpest sting that punctuated his midnight prayers was the consciousness that the best comfort he knew how to give this gentle friend was pitifully

inadequate to meet her need. For he knew that it was his sympathy, and not his faith, that helped her. He had never been able so to present religion as to make the slightest appeal to her judgment; he had not dreamed that its appeal must be to her heart, nor if he had would he have known how to make that appeal.

His only personal comfort in those days was whole-souled, loud-voiced, cheery Mme Vaillant. She mothered him as Lucie would have done, had Lucie been there. Ah, how he longed for Lucie, for that strong selfless love that had been the stay of all his self-conscious years! In these days of self-doubt he yearned like a sick child for her whole-hearted admiration, for her assured confidence in his ultimate success. Mme Vaillant was by no means confident of his success, nor was her admiration without criticism. He would never succeed in winning the village to piety: he might as well stop before he began; and as for his methods—how absurd to suppose that the good God and the saints liked to be wearied by perpetual prayer! Why not let them rest at night and during the intervals of the stated hours of devotion? Of course it was very noble, very self-sacrificing: canonization might lie that way—if Father Chardonnet hankered for that. She admired it all immensely, but after all, why not take life a little more easily, pray less, fast less—for example, M. le curé was fairly disrespectful to the *blanquette de veau* at that moment before him!—and find some pleasant pastime to fill up the

idle hours? Thus good Mme Vaillant; and her scolding was almost as consoling as her approbation, to the prayer-wearied man.

And then the boat! If it was any consolation that the meetings were sparsely attended Father Chardonnet had that consolation. It was near midsummer, and men, women and children were in the fields from dawn till the late twilight. Small wonder that, indifferent or openly opposed to religion, few of them felt inclined to rob themselves of rest for the sake of a meeting. A few idlers, a few curious persons, a few aged folk and restless children came irregularly; there could have been no real meetings but for the devoted attendance of certain converts from villages three, six, ten miles up the river, who would follow the boat till it was out of possible reach. But Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin knew well how to adapt themselves to the situation. The meetings were begun late and kept in session only half an hour, not to weary those who came, and there was much singing in the half hour that preceded as well as during the service. Though few persons entered the hall the crowd of listeners on the bank increased from evening to evening, and Nicolas and Bellah knew that they had conquered the situation when on the tenth evening a number of voices joined in the chorus of "Tell me the old, old story."

By that time, indeed, the children were singing hymns all over the village. Father Chardonnet in his walks to and from the church, or the inn when

he took his meals, would often hear fresh young voices break out in

Frères, frères, louons son amour,
(Brothers, brothers, let us praise his love)

or

Avançons nous joyeux, toujours joyeux
(Joyfully, joyfully, onward we move)

and down at the riverside where the women were pounding linen on the flat stones the sound of

Tel que je suis (Just as I am)

or

Une belle patrie (There is a happy land)

took the place of the senseless babble of former days. By the hymns, Father Chardonnet perceived, the new religion was conquering.

On the first evening of the arrival of the *Bon Berger* Father Chardonnet had turned back from his blind rush across the meadow, and had followed George and Jean Poêle afar off, when after anchoring the raft they had walked down the towing path to where the lights of the boat were beaded along the waterside. He had heard the glad words of welcome from Nicolas and Bellah as the two joined them on the platform, and from a secluded spot had observed the irresolute and aimless approach of certain of the villagers—he could hardly call them his parishioners. It was time for him to be on his knees in the Church, and he turned away, but as he went the notes of a hymn followed him, and though he could not distinguish the words, though his heart was sore with indignation at the presence

of the boat, the melody soothed and in a sense comforted him.

As he descended the hill in the early morning he met Nicolas face to face. It was a lovely summer dawn; larks were singing overhead, the pink convolvulus cups in the grass were brimming with dew; over the low hills in the east the sunrise glory was breaking, from the village came the faint stir of men and beasts making ready for the day's toil. The heart of the priest was exalted with prayer and beauty, till he met the man whom he held to be his enemy. Then the world grew dark.

Nicolas, looking in his haggard face, noted the change the months had made. Wan and worn, there was in it a beauty which had been lacking in the stalwart presence of the curé of Montargis—the beauty of soul conflict and of suffering for others.

Nicolas held out his hand, but in the blur that had come before his eyes the priest did not see it. The evangelist spoke, however:

"I was seeking you, M. le curé. They told me that you would be coming this way about this hour, and I should be glad of a few words of conversation."

The priest bowed.

"It is far from our desire, M. le curé," Nicolas went on, "to alienate from your congregation a single one of those to whom you minister. We are not seeking to make Protestants, but to make better Christians; to help our brethren and sisters

in their spiritual life. I know—all well informed persons know—of the spiritual deadness of this part of France. I have been told that your parish is a peculiarly difficult one because of the prevalence of atheism. I wish it might be possible for us to join hands in the effort to win back these wandering souls to allegiance to your Lord and mine."

Father Chardonnet had listened with courteous attention, and a wistful look came over his face as Nicolas spoke the last words. With some hesitation he answered:

"I almost wish it were possible, Mr. Pipotin, for us to work together, but I do not see how it can be. I admit that from all I have learned you seem to know the way to these people's affections, and even to their consciences, as I do not—as other priests do not. I am willing to admit, for I know it is true, that many are made more moral, more respectable—I may even say more religious—by your teachings. But I am bound first of all to serve my Church, and she alone can bring salvation. It does not avail that men are made better, so long as they remain outside the fold of Holy Church."

Nicolas gazed sorrowfully at the young priest, and the latter added slowly,

"It does not avail for eternity, but for time it does. I am patriot enough to see that your success is for the good of the State, and human enough to rejoice in anything that makes life more reputable and more satisfactory. Mr. Pipotin, I shall not oppose your work here, so far as it extends to

those who are not now loyal to the Church. And I am sure I may trust you to take no step to draw away any from their allegiance."

"You may indeed," said Nicolas, again holding out his hand, which this time the priest perceived and grasped. "I wish that our compact might have been more close and active, but as it is we will work together, each in his own sphere, for the redemption of this village from atheism and vice."

When the priest laid his weary head upon his pillow that summer morning it was with a curiously inexplicable sense of relief. It was as if a beleaguered army had descried afar off an approaching force as yet unknown, but which might be one of succor.

CHAPTER XXVI

JEAN POÊLE would have been almost willing to break his leg again if by such an accident he might have remained at Clarsigny near the *Bon Berger*. Not that he felt the need of instruction; he was too ignorant for that; but he longed for sympathy. Caroff had done much for him in the spring days that they spent together on the banks of the Cure, but after Caroff went away there had been no one to whom Jean could look for moral support. And though since his conversion he had never been very sorely tempted to break his pledge, he really did need companionship. He had too much common-sense to risk the temptation of the cabaret, and the sense of isolation became painful, accustomed as he had always been to the almost communal tracker life.

After the spring raft-building was done, he had undertaken to tow a craft to the junction of the Yonne and the Seine, with the intention thus to return to the life for which in fact he was best fitted. Changed as would be the conditions, he would be among old and familiar friends, and this is in Jean's present loneliness was much.

It was George who first brought the glad news that the *Bon Berger* was on the Yonne that summer. He had overheard the captain of a tug describing a curious craft which he had taken from Clamecy to

Auxerre, and had at once recognized the *Bon Berger*. At Massagny they learned that the boat had gone on to Clarsigny, only three miles beyond, and that evening saw the raft moored near Clarsigny, and George and his father on the boat.

It was a long story that they had to tell, and although Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin had heard of them since their parting, by means first of Touillier, and afterward of Loic Caroff, the evening with its many interruptions was too short for all they had to say. Besides, there was Thérèse and little Ernestine yet to see; and George promised to come to the boat at sunrise and escort Mrs. Pipotin to the raft before it went on its way.

Bellah found Thérèse a far more contented, if not a more enlightened woman than when she had seen her in the comparative comfort of her own *berrichon*. There was indeed no particular hardship in living in a tent on a raft in the beautiful summer weather: but now Thérèse must take her turn in dragging the raft, and though they were going with the current this work was arduous.

"But that is nothing, Madame," Thérèse assured her, "compared with what I used to suffer when Jean was given to drink. You can have no idea how different everything is now. He never gets angry now, never complains; he is as gentle as a lamb. One would say it was not the same man," she added reflectively.

"Well, is it not indeed so?" asked Mrs. Pipotin. "Has not God made him a different man?"

"So he says, Madame," replied Thérèse, "and so George says, but I don't understand that. He had no need to drink and curse and swear if he did not want to. Well, now he sees the folly of it all, as it was shown him on your boat, and so he just doesn't do so any more."

They were sitting on the river bank not far from the raft, and now George emerged from the tent leading Ernestine. Tears rushed to Bellah's eyes as she took the blind child in her arms, but she was grateful to see that habit had in some measure reconciled both child and mother to their affliction. George was eager in his recital of Ernestine's newly acquired accomplishments; how she had learned to know people by the voice after hearing them speak only once, how she never stumbled when walking, how she could be trusted not to go near the edge of the raft, and most wonderful of all, how she could actually make baskets! Not very well yet, to be sure; Mother Manette had only begun to teach her just before they left Guegnon, but when she grew older she would make them better, and send them to the fairs, and so earn money for mother. And at this Ernestine laughed merrily; the first time, Bellah reflected, that she had ever heard her laugh like a child—like her own happy little Clarice.

The little girl had been shyly glad of the presence of the captain lady, whom George had not permitted her to forget, and had nestled down in her arms without speaking; but her shyness being broken

by her laugh she now turned her face toward Mrs. Pipotin and said, "Dr. Jesus will make me see when I go where he lives, won't he?"

A pang shot through Bellah's heart, but she only answered, "Yes, dear."

"We used to think he lived with you," the child went on, "but George says he has gone away now, and we must wait until we can go to his house. It won't be long, will it?" she added wistfully.

"It will not seem long," said Bellah gently, "when once you are there, Ernestine; and meantime you are going to be a good and patient little girl, I know."

Thérèse had uttered an ejaculation of despair as the child spoke, and turning to her, Bellah added, "If you could manage to come to Paris some winter, there are schools there where they teach children to read without seeing, and that would help Ernestine very much."

"To read without seeing!" replied Thérèse, shaking her head. "I don't see how that could be."

"Ah," said Bellah brightly, "that's because you don't know how much sense there is in the tips of these little fingers," taking Ernestine's hand in hers; and the child laughed again, more at Bellah's manner than at what she had said.

As George escorted Mrs. Pipotin back to the *Bon Berger* he asked, "Can you tell me, captain lady, why Jesus did not make Ernestine see?"

Bellah had dreaded the question, not knowing how to adapt to George's comprehension that which alone she could say; but the boy himself helped her.

"At first I thought it must be a mistake: that there was no Jesus, or else that he could not do as much as you thought he could. But after awhile—that day that the Turning Stone was no good, you remember—that gentleman, Mr. Touillier, showed me what a mistake that was. Jesus *must* be able to do everything, musn't he? For just think, captain lady, there was no one to work for us, and yet somehow we always had enough; and then father came home, and he had stopped drinking, and then—oh, so many things—and who *could* have done it all but Jesus? So I know it must be just as you said when he—sent you to us at that time —" the boy's voice faltered for a moment. "So I know he *must* be alive and of course he *can* do everything. And so—I can't think why he makes Ernestine wait till we go where he lives, but—don't you think he must know best, captain lady?"

Bellah put her arm over the boy's shoulder, as they walked together. "You have learned the great lesson, George," she said, her voice somewhat unsteady. "But do you not pray to him still?"

"For Ernestine to see?" asked George. "No, captain lady, I don't ask that. Do you think it would be fair? For he does know best, doesn't he?"

"Yes, indeed," she answered, "and some time you will know why it was not best for Ernestine to see. Still, you must remember that he loves to have us pray to him and tell him all our troubles and ask his help, waiting patiently for him to do what he knows to be best. And meantime he has given you to Ernestine, to make up for what he cannot let her have now."

"As he gave you to me?" George asked, and then caught his breath, abashed, but the captain lady only smiled.

"Yes, and as he sent Mr. Touillier to you when you were in despair, and Mr. Caroff to your father when he was in great temptation. We are all his helpers, George, he lets us help him do good to those he loves. Never forget that. You are his helper, too."

So they parted, and the raft went on its way, but that new thought made life a new thing for George Poêle.

At St. Mammès they began again the old life which they had left just one year before. It seemed an age since then and yet nothing was changed. There were the tumble-down cabins and the children and the donkeys, there was even the *Jolie Charbonnière*, though it was Pierre Ducros's Nantine that drew her now, instead of Georgette, their own faithful little "minister" in canal-side parlance. And there was no *Bon Berger* going through the lock to bring new life and new hopes to thoughtless, mischievous boys.

CHAPTER XXVII

THERE was discontent in Clarsigny, for the hay was being spoiled by incessant rain. Oaths loud and deep punctuated the discourse of men who gathered under the dripping shelter of projecting eaves, or brought their wet boots to spoil Mme Vaillant's neatly sanded floor while they sat over glasses of absinthe in the middle of the day. The women, doubly anxious over the prospective loss and the present waste of money, were uncertain of temper, and boxed and cuffed the children, who took refuge in the only shelter where they were welcome the cabin of the *Bon Berger*. For the sake of the opportunity thus offered, Justine willingly wiped the floor three times a day.

Bellah kept her impromptu classes busy and happy with Bible stories, pictures and the singing of hymns, in all which Anna, now nine years old, was a real help. The little girl, carefully trained and intelligent beyond her years, had of late become deeply interested in the work in which her parents were engaged, and great was her joy when she was permitted to sit up late enough to usher the attendants to their seats at the evening meeting, or when her father permitted her to accompany him on a tract distributing mission.

Nicolas had at once perceived that under the circumstances prevailing at Clarsigny his best intro-

duction to the intelligent attention of the people, especially of the men, was by means of tracts. Tract distribution is by no means common in France, and in the absence of free reading-rooms the alert and hungry minds of the common people eagerly accept any reading matter, good or bad, that may come in their way. Of bad there is more than enough; the obscene and immoral press has become a public nuisance in France, against which Protestants and Catholics are working together, with legislation and philanthropy actively co-operating. But the common mind is not yet utterly vitiated; it is an unheard-of thing that a religious tract is received with anything but respect or even eagerness; it is always read with interest, perhaps many times over, and with true French thrift carefully preserved. The tracts which Mr. Pipotin distributed formed the subject of many an interesting conversation in cottage kitchens and court-yards, in the fields, and even on the platform of the boat. By the third week of his stay at Clarsigny they had attracted a large number of the villagers, especially the men, to the meetings, and the rainy weather completed the work. The boat was now so crowded, night after night, that Nicolas asked the Committee, in Paris, to permit him to remain a second three weeks in Clarsigny, three weeks being under ordinary circumstances the usual stay at any given point.

One of the most interesting of those who came regularly was Philippe Jacot, an old soldier of the

Crimean war. One of his tent mates had had a New Testament, and Jacot had occasionally whiled away a weary hour by reading it. But his tent mate was killed and his belongings were sent home, and though Jacot often tried he had never been able to get hold of another copy of the little book. Yet it was doubtless his memories of what he had read that had kept him from the prevailing atheism and made him, as some one had told Nicolas, the one man in the village who attended mass. Straying into the boat one evening he heard a chapter read which awakened the old associations, and after that he never failed to come; always sitting in the same place, drinking in every word, his fine open face a real inspiration to the preacher. He never appeared to find the least incongruity between the teachings on the boat and the service of the Church, which indeed he now attended more assiduously than ever; and Nicolas did not deem that the old man's uninvited presence was a violation of the compact between himself and the priest. Instances of Roman Catholics being made more devout and consistent adherents of their own Church are indeed not uncommon in the McAll Mission.

One morning Nicolas awoke with a severe cold and sore throat, due to his not having had time to change his wet clothes before meeting the evening previous.

"I am particularly sorry," he said to Bellah, "because I promised to take a tract to Jules Potin; he is in great distress of mind, and I have one

which I think will help him. And Père Jacot, good fellow, longs for a Gospel. I promised to take him one, and I am sorry to disappoint them."

"Father," exclaimed Anna, eagerly, "I'll take them! I know the way. Do let me go!"

Both parents protested. "It is pouring," said the mother, "and the streets are deep in mud. It cannot be thought of."

"I shan't get wet, mother, indeed I shan't," insisted the little girl. "I will wear your waterproof cape and take father's big umbrella. Do let me go with the tracts; they do so much good. Do let me, little father, I shall be so happy."

They could not resist the child's earnestness, and having been well bundled up, off trudged the little maiden under her great umbrella, the tracts safe in a waterproof bag on her arm.

She had given the tract to Jules Potin, and called in at old Mother Barnot's with a leaflet containing a hymn. Having sung the hymn, to the old woman's great satisfaction, she set off up the hill, for Père Jacot lived in an old hut at the corner of the manor garden.

She had often noticed the tangled vines hanging over the high wall, and the great trees towering above it, but her father had never suggested leaving a tract at La Cerisette. But as Anna came out from Père Jacot's hut a strong impulse moved her to go on to the garden door and ring the bell. It jangled so loudly that she was almost frightened, yet when no one answered she rang again. Still

there was no answer, and half terrified though all the more earnest in her wish to leave a tract, Anna pulled the bell a third time, more vigorously than ever. A few moments later she heard a step inside and the door was opened half-way.

Child that she was, Anna was struck by the expression of Mme Languard's face as she stood in the half-opened door. Unutterably sad, there was also a look of horror such as the little girl had never seen, and which half terrified her. Yet she smiled, and holding out a tract, she said:

"Don't you want this, Madame? It is a lovely story; all about how Jesus took good care of some people."

Mme Languard held out her hand without a word, and the little girl, with a bright "Good morning, Madame, I know you'll like the story," turned away.

The rain cleared up before sunset, and there was promise of pleasant weather. The meeting was thinly attended, for the moonlight must be utilized in the fields, repairing as best might be the ravages of the rain. For this Nicolas was not sorry, as his voice was hoarse, and speaking rather painful. The service was made as informal as possible, and the hour was half over when Father Chardonnet came in, and took a seat apart from the little group closely gathered around their teacher.

A few minutes later a little dog ran in, and after him the worthy landlady. Mme Vaillant had never been on the boat before, nor had she ever been in-

vited, Nicolas knowing her to be one of Father Chardonnet's most zealous adherents.

The little dog ran the whole length of the room investigating and smelling, and finally curled himself up on the platform, whence he turned a deaf ear, or rather a blind eye, to his mistress's pantomimic exhortations. Too courteous to interrupt the service, Mme Vaillant seated herself in the nearest vacant chair, and her interest was at once attracted by the conversation that ensued, for the informal service had in some sort taken on the character of a class meeting, and one or two of the more intelligent men were asking for light on certain points with which their former atheistic doctrines were in conflict. At the close of the service the landlady stepped up to Nicolas, and accepting his proffered hand, said, in her strong cheery voice, "I was going to beat Tou-tou there for running away from me. But now I don't blame him: the poor beast is wiser than I, for he had sense to know that this is a good place, and I have been beast (stupid) enough to keep away all these weeks."

Father Chardonnet lingered in his far corner until all had gone; then he approached Nicolas who was hastening toward him.

"Will you come with me?" he asked. "I see that you have a bad cold, but the night is clear, and this is a case where you are needed."

"Of course I will come," the Evangelist answered, and without asking more he turned to look for his hat. Bellah brought it with his overshoes,

while the priest gazed around as if in search of some one. "The little girl," he said, in reply to Mrs. Pipotin's look of inquiry. "It is too late to see her?"

"She is sound asleep," replied Bellah, smiling, "but she will be glad to see you to-morrow, M. l'abbé!"

"She is a blessed child," said the priest, earnestly, and went away with Nicolas.

Outside, the villagers were slowly moving away in little groups, and the priest turned into an unfrequented path which brought them out upon the high road beyond the village. As they walked he explained his errand.

"You can hardly have failed to hear of the sorrows—I may well say the tragedy—at the manor house," he said.

Nicolas admitted that he had heard something of the story.

"It would be impossible to tell you how nobly that admirable woman, Mme Languard, has borne her martyrdom," Father Chardonnet went on, "all the more nobly because, as you doubtless know, she has no hope of a future life—no belief in God. And yet in justice to her you ought to know it all, down to the smallest details, as I have known them, before hearing of the horror from which that blessed child, your little daughter, saved that sorely tried woman. For otherwise you will find it hard to understand that she was about to imperil her soul's salvation (as we know would have been the case, though she

would not think so), when she was arrested by the ringing of the bell—three times repeated by your little girl."

Nicolas uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"It is hard to understand," the priest went on, "how, knowing herself to be absolutely essential to her family, and having so long and so nobly borne her burden, her self-sacrificing spirit should at last have failed her. Things have indeed been peculiarly trying of late: her husband, her daughter, are now little better than raving maniacs, and surely ought to be put under some form of restraint. But in her agony this resource seems not to have occurred to Mme Languard; and this morning, in what we must believe to have been a temporary aberration, the poor lady was preparing to hang herself when she was startled by the ringing of the bell. She resolved to pay no attention to it, but when it rang again, and still a third time, she could not resist the appeal. It would be only a quarter hour longer, she said to herself, and she went to the garden door.

"There she saw the sweet face of a little child, who put a tract into her hand with some gentle words and went away. And when I went to her this afternoon for my daily call—for of late she has needed all that I could do for her—little dreaming of what, but for your child and the mercy of the Mother of Mercy I should have found there, I found instead a woman alive indeed, and innocent of mortal sin, but so unstrung, so agonized in

spirit, that I was powerless to help her. She had your daughter's little tract in her hand; she had been reading it again and again, and when I found no words of mine availing to calm her mental agony, I resolved to ask you to see her and do what you can for her."

Nicolas stood for a moment speechless. Then putting his hand on the shoulder of the tall priest he said in a choked voice, "God help you, my brother," and they went on together in silence.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The indifference of the public was overcome at last, and from nearly every house in the village, and from Méron, the twin village across the river, and from the outlying hamlets, men, women and children flocked to the boat to learn this new religion which said nothing about the saints or the Mother of God, and yet somehow went right to the heart. The villagers had indeed paid little heed to such omissions, having long ago forgotten their religious practices. But one evening at sunset a group of cheery, well-dressed peasants from a neighboring hamlet came to visit the boat, and asked many questions as to the faith that was taught there. Finally one said, in slow, deliberate words, "But you don't believe in the Virgin!"

Bellah took up a New Testament, and turning to St. Luke's first chapter, read Gabriel's words, and the salutation of Elizabeth, "Blessed art thou among women," and then Mary's hymn, "All generations shall call me blessed."

"Why, that is what we believe," they exclaimed; and Bellah turned a few pages and read our Lord's question, "Who is my mother?" and his answer, "My mother and my brethren are they who hear the Word of God and do it." Then she explained that these women could themselves enter the Lord's family by hearing and believing what God said in

his book. The women were deeply impressed. "We never knew these things before," they said, and each bought a New Testament, promising to come on Sunday to hear more.

The deepest interest of both Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin in these days centered in the manor house. Nicolas had not returned there after his first visit, feeling himself bound by his agreement with the priest not to go unless Mme Languard sent for him, and though she had evidently found comfort in his presence and help in his teachings she had not asked him to return. But, as was indeed almost inevitable under the circumstances, the incident had drawn the priest and the evangelist nearer together. Nicolas had gone to Father Chardonnet the next morning to inquire after the family at La Cerisette, and the month of the Perpetual Adoration now being over, the priest from this time brought him daily bulletins.

As to Mme Languard, there was little to say. After that first evening, when Father Chardonnet, finding her completely unstrung, nervously shattered by the thought of her intended suicide and its strange interruption, and being powerless to soothe or quiet her, had called upon Nicolas for aid, the lady of the manor had recovered her wonted calm, and went on with her arduous duties as if nothing had happened.

But a few days later, Father Chardonnet, not without some embarrassment, asked Nicolas if he would trust "that blessed child" with him for an

hour; Mme Languard had spoken as if she would like to see her; and after that little Anna went more than once to La Cerisette. Her parents quite understood that her artless unconsciousness of the tragedy that was being enacted there, her child-like interest in the unwonted surroundings, and her simple talk would bring refreshment and solace to the overwrought lady of the manor.

A few days later the priest brought word that Mme de Marcy, whose mental disturbance had of late been much aggravated, had become seriously ill with fever, and M. Languard appeared to be falling into semi-idiotic condition. Under the circumstances it seemed impossible for Mme Languard to obtain relief by sending either or both of her patients to institutions, as both Father Chardonnet and Mr. Pipotin had thought would be best. The only alternative appeared to be to find some one who would come to Mme Languard's aid.

"And in this matter I fancy that she is hindered by want of ready money," said the priest, who however reserved he might be on other matters had entirely taken Mr. Pipotin into confidence with regard to affairs at La Cerisette.

"But a Sister of Charity," said Nicolas.

"She would not have one in the house," said the priest, hastily. "You don't realize yet how opposed they all are to religious things. I think a Sister's costume would make both her patients utterly unmanageable."

Nicolas considered. "And she has no friend?"

"It would need to be a woman of great physical strength and perfect self-possession, accustomed to hard work and indifferent to privations, yet refined and agreeable; one who would inspire confidence and command obedience. Where shall we find such a woman?"

"I think you know her," said Bellah, who had been sitting near by, busy with her needle. "Have you not described Mlle Chardonnet?"

"Lucie!" exclaimed the priest. "Why, yes; I had not thought of her, but I see, it is she we need. And the schools are just closing. I will see about that." He went away at once.

The next evening Mme Vaillant, who had never missed a meeting since her little dog had enticed her into the boat, told Bellah that the sister of M. le curé had come to help nurse Madame la Marquise. And Bellah could not but rejoice that even under such sorrowful circumstances the brother and sister were together again.

CHAPTER XXIX

The evening of the day following Mlle Chardonnet's arrival, Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin were surprised to see Mme Languard come to the boat. She was leaning on the arm of Mme Vaillant, who as Nicolas had heard was the one woman in the village who had succeeded in some degree in breaking down or ignoring her reserve. The landlady explained that Mme Languard needed a little "distraction," and though Nicolas could hardly forbear a smile as he reflected that she probably had enough of that at home, he offered a silent prayer that some word to help might reach the much tried woman that evening.

Mme Languard listened attentively and seemed to find especial pleasure in the singing, but hurried away at the close saying that she must not leave Mlle Chardonnet longer alone.

Nicolas was not surprised that Father Chardonnet did not come the next morning; he would naturally wish to visit his sister; but toward evening Mme Vaillant came with the news that Mme la Marquise was somewhat better, but that M. Languard had been found on the floor of his room in a sort of fit, and was lying in an unconscious condition, of which the only outcome could be death, and the only hope that it might come soon. Father Chardonnet, the landlady said, was in

constant attendance. "Indeed," she added, "you might say he is acting as nurse to the old gentleman, his sister being occupied with Madame la Marquise, who is critically ill. The church is closed," she went on, "M. le curé has no leisure for services;" and Nicolas could well understand that amid the complicated duties and difficulties that pressed upon the afflicted lady of the manor the path of duty was for the moment made clear to the young priest. He was, therefore, all the more surprised early on the third morning to receive a hurriedly written note from Father Chardonnet announcing that M. Languard had died at four o'clock and that Mme Languard desired to see Mr. Pipotin with reference to the funeral.

"Me!" he exclaimed, showing the note to his wife. "And Father Chardonnet in the house! I cannot understand it."

"Perhaps it is out of respect to her husband, who was so violently anti-clerical," replied Bellah. "But why not a civil funeral in that case?"

The priest met the evangelist at the garden door; he looked fatigued and deeply depressed. In the house the newly widowed woman awaited him, her simple manner entirely unchanged. Without preamble she proffered her request that Mr. Pipotin would make an address at the grave of her husband.

As gently as possible Nicolas said to her, "Are you not under a misapprehension, Madame? I cannot make an academic speech on such an occa-

sion. Standing beside an open grave, if I speak at all, it must be about the Gospel and the Cross of Christ."

"I understand," she said, "and my dear friend here," she laid her hand upon the arm of Father Chardonnet who stood near her, "he also understands. My husband was a free-thinker. I also—am one. My husband belonged to one or two societies which will be largely represented at his grave. Respect for his memory, and courtesy to his friends—" she hesitated—"my own conscience also, forbid the offices of a priest. But you, my dear sir, I ask you to conduct this ceremony. Say what you like; come without hesitation. You will be respectfully heard."

As Nicolas pondered her request without answering the priest spoke. "I shall be glad if you will grant us this favor, Mr. Pipotin." And Nicolas could do nothing other than consent.

As Mme Languard had expected, there were many at the funeral. The train from Paris set down a distinguished looking group, some of them wearing the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor, some of them recognizable as the originals of newspaper celebrities. Free-thinkers all of them; and Nicolas, as he stood beside the open grave, felt that in a sense this was the opportunity of a lifetime. On the outskirts of the group stood the villagers, every one of whom he now knew. Slow-witted and ignorant in comparison with these brilliant men, they were yet superior to them by so

much as their souls were awake to the touch of God.

Nicolas Pipotin was no orator, and he knew that many who stood near him were renowned as public speakers. But he was not there to make a brilliant speech. His heart was stirred with the unrecognized pathos of the situation, and in all earnestness and simplicity he set forth the adequacy of the Gospel of Christ to meet the deepest needs of the human soul. Perhaps he had never spoken more forcibly; but of that he was not aware. He only knew that never before had he had so clear a view of the fact that the love of God in Christ is the key to the great enigma of death, and the still greater enigma of life.

Possessed and stirred by the scene and the service, he went away by himself when all was over, for a long walk over the hill. He needed the solitude which the boat never afforded him, for meditation and for prayer. The thought of that heart broken woman with no better solace than her own fortitude moved him to the depths of his soul, but more intense even than his desire to bring her to a knowledge of God was his longing to find the way to Father Chardonnet's heart. Turn where he would the vision of the young priest's face, white and set, as he stood apart, behind the group around the grave, was ever before him.

The July sun was setting as he came down the hill and through the village, his soul refreshed by prayer. It was nearly time for the service on the

boat, and as he drew near the riverside he saw groups of men sitting on logs, smoking the evening pipe, women chatting together, and children playing at *cache-cache* under the trees, all waiting for him to come, remove the chain from the gangway, and give them entrance. It was a pretty picture and to Nicolas, who recalled the days of waiting so lately past, a scene of great encouragement. The Mission Boat, once utterly alien to the life of the village, was now its very focus and centre. Men and women greeted him with affectionate heartiness as he drew near, children ran up and seized his hands; consciously or unconsciously they were all bound together by the love of Christ.

The boat work had indeed by this time become so important that again Mr. and Mrs. Brodart had been asked to come from Sens to help, and they were expected the next day. The question of accommodation was a difficult one in the little village, and Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin were discussing it with Mme Vaillant next morning when Father Chardonnet entered. Learning the subject under consideration he at once came to the rescue, offering to give up his comparatively comfortable room and betake himself to the loft of the inn, which, fitted up with four beds and accessible only by a ladder, was the sole accommodation for wayfarers which the village afforded.

"The servant is not better than his master," he said with a smile when Bellah protested, yet with thanks in the name of her friends for his wil-

lingness to be kind. "Our Lord was doubtless often more poorly accommodated."

"Yet do not think," said Nicolas, earnestly, "that I underrate or misapprehend the sacrifice you are making. There is far more in this than merely giving up a comfortable room." The priest looked at him almost with affection, but he said no more and went away.

It had been like this ever since Father Chardonnet had first taken Nicolas to La Cerisette; from that evening his manner toward the evangelist had been not simply friendly, but almost brotherly; yet all the time no word personal to himself had been uttered. As to what was going on in his own mind, what were his feelings on seeing men and women who were nominally his parishioners flocking to the *Bon Berger*, he was absolutely silent. Except on the evening when he had come to take Nicolas to La Cerisette, he had never attended a service, though of late he had come almost daily to the boat. After Mr. and Mrs. Brodart arrived it was still the same; he made no opposition, though those whom he would fain have seen at church flocked to the Mission Boat; he came as before with tidings from the manor house or messages from his sister, but he never attended a service.

As is frequently the case in the Boat work, not only peasants and villagers, but the important people of the country round were all now attending the meetings, where Mr. Brodart's powerful preaching made a profound impression.

The Mayor of Méron, the twin village across the river, was regular in attendance, and one evening he said to Désiré:

"I am in favor of the separation of Church and State. The best way, in my opinion, to bring it about is to close the churches, and for this reason I advise all my friends to stay away from the services. It is fifteen years since any member of my family has been inside of a church, and when all do as I do the churches will become extinct and the separation perfect. Nevertheless the people need a strong moral influence—a spiritualizing influence if you must call it so; and your work, I perceive, is precisely calculated to extend that influence and raise the populace to a higher moral level."

Désiré did not point out to him the necessity of the human soul for something more than a high moral standard; for the present he left the teachings and the worship of the meetings to do their own work.

Others, less intellectually gifted than the Mayor, were more perspicacious as to the character of the religion taught on the boat. Among them was the worthy landlady, cheery, kindly Mme Vaillant. For a time she had come nightly, then she had remained away, then returned now and again, and finally she began to come regularly, sitting near the organ and joining so lustily in the hymns with her strong clear voice that her neighbors began to ask her laughingly if she was paid five francs a night for singing. At last one afternoon, coming to the

children's meeting, she had remained and unburdened her soul to Bellah.

"You do not know it," she said, "but after two or three times I was very near never coming back. All that Monsieur your husband said suited me so exactly, he described so perfectly all my secret sorrows and shortcomings, that I was quite ashamed, and angry into the bargain. 'What business has that man,' I said to myself, 'to come prying in that fashion into my family life, and into my secret thoughts, and then go and talk about them before all the world?' I even stayed away a while. However, I reflected that Monsieur did not know me, he had never been in my house, he had hardly even spoken to me. And then I understood that the one who knew me so well was not Monsieur, but the Lord. So I came back to the meetings. And Madame, I have heard here the voice of God. He has spoken to me more and more distinctly. He tells me that it is not enough to be diligent at mass and confession and in saying my rosary, that what he wants is a new woman, through and through. I now see that though I used to think myself very religious I really had no religion. I lived like a beast; for weeks together I never really gave a thought to God. Now I cannot live an instant without him; he is always present with me."

As in honor bound, Nicolas repeated the substance of this conversation to the priest, explaining to him that this was the unassisted work of the Holy Spirit in the woman's heart, as he had never said a personal word to her.

"I know that," Father Chardonnet answered, his fine face, which from day to day had seemed to grow more sad, taking on a deeper shade of melancholy, "Mme Vaillant has not been remiss in confession of late, and she has herself told me all that was going on in her mind." He hesitated. "The good woman has been my right hand in this parish," he at last said, slowly. "I have relied on her to a degree that she herself is far from appreciating. She is not aware that her—what shall I say?—her experience is the entering wedge that little by little and more and more will separate her from her church."

"It need not necessarily be so," said Nicolas. "Many who have come to a deeper knowledge of themselves and of God through this mission remain loyal adherents of their church and yours."

The priest looked fixedly at him, shook his head slowly, and then said, with a grave smile, "Do not think, dear sir, that I shall deem it a fault of yours if I may no longer rely on this good parishioner, as I have done. I know that it is not you who have taken her from my side."

"What would I not give to know what is going on in that dear young fellow's heart," said Nicolas to his wife, as the priest walked hastily away. "But it will not do to ask, now; I can only pray."

CHAPTER XXX

In the shaded parlor of the manor house sat its mistress, her hands idle at last after so many busy years. Since her husband's death a strange apathy had taken possession of her; without remonstrance and almost without observation she had permitted her multiform duties to slip into the hands of Mlle Chardonnet, who vigorous, energetic, and accustomed to hard work was very ready to assume them. Yet the younger woman would gladly have seen Mme Languard's interest in things revive, as the days went on; and it was with pleasure that she let little Anna Pipotin in at the garden gate.

The child seated herself silently at Mme Languard's side, her eyes fixed upon her with such a waiting expression that it finally roused the lady to interest. "What were you saying, my dear?" she asked.

"Nothing Madame, I was only wondering if you would not like me to say my Psalm to you. I always call it my Psalm, for it is printed on my birthday in a book that mother reads every morning."

Mme Languard's attention wandered again, and she did not reply until the little girl asked again, "Shall I say it, Madame?"

"Yes, dear child," said the lady with a sigh, and Anna standing before her, her hands behind her

back, school-fashion, repeated distinctly and correctly the Twenty-third Psalm.

In all her life Mme Languard had never heard the words before, and they arrested her attention. Somehow they soothed and comforted her—or was it only the fresh young voice of the child she was learning to love?

"That is very sweet," she said, "can you repeat more of it?"

"There is no more of that, Madame," said Anna, "but it makes one think of the Good Shepherd, doesn't it?" Our Boat is named for him, you know, the Good Shepherd that giveth his life for the sheep. Would you like me to tell you the story of the sheep that was lost?"

Mme Langaurd assented and Anna repeated the verses, adding, "I love to think of Jesus going out in the dark woods and the rocky hills looking for the naughty sheep that was lost—don't you? And how glad he is when he finds it and brings it home safe: that means us, you know."

"Us?" asked Mme Languard.

"Yes, mother explained that to me; how we are just like the foolish sheep, when we forget to love Jesus and follow him, and go off trying to have our own way. He never gets angry with us, though he is very sorry; but he just goes after us, and tries to bring us back—make us good, you know. And when he has brought us back he is very glad, and the angels in heaven are glad."

In the door stood Father Chardonnet, but no one

noticed him and he walked away. He went out upon the terrace and sat down, his face buried in his hands. There his sister found him.

She had not been unaware of the change that had come upon him since the proud days when they had first lived together at Montargis. She had thought it not unnatural that he should be sad and worn; disappointed hope, wounded pride, would account for that. And she had been too arduously occupied since her arrival at La Cerisette for any intimate talk with him; yet she had come to realize that the change lay deeper and meant more than she had supposed.

She put her arms around him and drew his hot head upon her breast as she stood beside him. Ah, what rest it was to that poor aching head to be thus pillowed on the heart that had been so loyally his from his earliest moment! He closed his eyes and drank deep of the luxury of rest. Then he raised his head.

"We shall get time to talk some day, Antoine," she said, "then you will tell me all about it.

"Yes," he said slowly, "when I know." Then raising his eyes to hers he asked, "Have you ever asked yourself, Lucie, what sort of a religion it is which is powerless to bring comfort to woes like *hers*—" he nodded in the direction of the house, "while a little child—like that—can go straight to her heart?"

Lucie looked at her brother for a moment, then a querulous voice from above stairs called her

name. She bent and kissed him on the forehead. "I must go," she said hurriedly. "But do not think too much, Antoine. Remember you are over-tired, over-strained with sympathy. The lack is neither in your religion nor in you." She smiled brightly upon him and hurried away.

Little Anna was going down the garden walk and the priest went to Mme Languard. His heart throbbed with a curious mixture of pain and gladness as she came to him looking more like her old self than he had seen her since the funeral.

She put her hand in his. "Dear friend," she said, "can you tell me why it is that that child's words comfort me so? She is a religious little soul, and it is her religion that she talks to me; but she is not half so religious as you, nor one-tenth part so well informed, and yet your religion helps me not at all. *You* help me, your kindness, your sympathy, but what you say to me falls upon my heart like a stone."

Father Chardonnet turned away and walked twice across the room. Then standing before her he said, "I think I am beginning to understand why it is. I have no religion."

"You!" she exclaimed, "you, so pious, so devout, so wholly devoted to your church! Do not say that. If you have no religion who has?"

"That little child," he said gravely, "those people on the boat. They can help you, my dear friend. I cannot."

That evening Nicolas, looking over the audi-

ence as Mr. Brodart rose to give out the hymn saw Father Chardonnet standing in the door.

The twice prolonged stay of the *Bon Berger* had reached its limit; it was the last evening. Every seat was filled, and every inch of standing room, while the bank was crowded with as many more waiting for the second meeting which had for weeks become necessary. Many of the women had brought bouquets or potted plants, and after a stirring sermon by Mr. Brodart and a few words of farewell counsel by Nicolas a number of the villagers spoke.

"Before you came," said one, "it had been years since I had set foot in a church. I did not like the comedy that is played there; I don't like it now, and I shall not go there. Bnt what you have told me of Jesus and his love for us has quenched a thirst that has been burning, burning in my soul all these years. I shall never forget that rainy morning when you came into my cottage, and knelt and prayed with me. You spoke to Jesus as if he were a third there with us, and before you had finished I knew that he was there."

Father Chardonnet standing in the open door turned and went away. Through the dark crooked street he groped his way to the inn, and stumbled up the ladder to the loft. Two of the beds were occupied by carters, who were exchanging obscene stories in the dark. He did not hear them; he felt his way to his own corner and fell upon his knees.

The night was a wild one. Before midnight a

heavy thunder squall arose, and after the lightning and thunder were over, the rain still fell heavily and the wind blew fiercely. Father Chardonnet, lying awake, heard the tumult with gratification. The tug would surely not come for the *Bon Berger* in such a storm; there would be opportunity for a conversation with Mr. Pipotin in the morning; and lulled by this certainty he at last fell asleep.

When he awoke it was broad day; the wind had died down though the rain was falling heavily on the tiled roof. The carters had gone and from below came the sound of voices—men storm-stayed from their work in the fields conversing together in the inn parlor.

Father Chardonnet sprang up and hurrying on his clothes hastened out into the rain, and down to the waterside. The *Bon Berger* was gone.

"I think it was a risk for them to set out in a summer tempest like this," said a man who had come across the meadow from the nearest cottage. "But the tug came before daylight according to orders, and Mr. Pipotin thought best not to incur the expense of waiting. The captain of the tug thought the wind would die down at sunrise, but as M. le curé sees, it is rising instead. We have not seen the worst of it yet. It is not much too soon for the equinoctial storms."

So Nicolas thought as the morning wore along, and both wind and rain increased. It had originally been the intention that the *Bon Berger* should slowly make its way down the river to the cathedral

city Sens, where Mr. Brodart was pastor of the small Protestant "temple;" but the stay at Clarsigny having been so prolonged it had been deemed best to push on at once to Sens, where the boat was eagerly expected by the more devoted members of Mr. Brodart's church, and where an extensive work of evangelization had been planned. Since the journey could easily be made in less than a day, it had been arranged that the pastor and his wife should come to the boat in the early morning and travel in company with their friends; and this notwithstanding the storm they had done.

Before midday, however, it hardly needed Mr. Pipotin's nautical experience to perceive that the journey was likely to be a serious affair. The wind had become a hurricane, the rain almost a flood. The Yonne had overflowed its low banks and turned the broad intervale into a lake. The captain of the tug had manifestly lost his bearings, and it now became evident that he and his crew were drinking heavily. Nicolas was consulting with Mr. Brodart as to the propriety of assuming command of the tug, notwithstanding his ignorance of steam navigation, when a sudden shock and crash told them that the *Bon Berger* had run aground.

With the tempestuous wind the situation was sufficiently critical, even aside from the consideration of the injury to the work should the boat be disabled. But no time was lost in lamentations. The women and children, though startled, were perfectly calm, and Nicolas and Mr. Brodart had

already got the dory into the water when shouts were heard from shoreward, and a flat bottomed boat appeared, rapidly poled toward the *Bon Berger* by several men. Mr. Pipotin was too busy to study their faces, but his wife, from a window of the cabin, recognized one of the men as Robin Arnaud. They had brought ropes, and the crew of the tug being somewhat sobered by the danger of the situation, they all went to work with a will, and before long the *Bon Berger* was again in the current.

It was then that Nicolas recognized Robin Arnaud. "And it is to you that we owe our safety?" he exclaimed.

Robin flushed with gratification. "To me and these comrades," he answered indicating his companions. "I came over here in search of work two days ago; and glad was I when the comrades told me that the boat was in this country and they had been on it. They knew that you were leaving Clarsigny to-day, and so, when the storm grew so bad we concluded to get a boat and watch for you. The comrades knew you were out of your course as soon as you came round the bend, so we concluded to go out to meet you in case you needed help."

As he spoke, Nicolas noted how thin and wan the young man was. "You ought not to be out in this storm," he said.

"I am strong," said Robin hastily. "Oh, there is nothing the matter with me. And if there were, do I not owe you and her," pointing to the cabin door where Bellah now stood, "my immortal

soul? I am thankful for the opportunity to serve you and her, no matter how."

The storm was now sensibly abating and the rescuing party soon entered their boat and rowed away. By the time the *Bon Berger* reached Sens the sun was shining through the clouds and all the west was glorious with color.

The visit of the *Bon Berger* had been well prepared for by Mr. Brodart and the elders of his church ; yet the success of the work was at first not brilliant. Sens, a cathedral city, is strongly Roman Catholic, and for a time it was only members of the Protestant congregation and a few curious persons who attended. Yet former experiences taught the evangelists to wait patiently for the leaven to work. Meanwhile Mr. and Mrs. Pipotin went away for a much needed vacation, their places on the boat being taken by Loic and Henriette Caroff, and Anna and Clarice, at Mrs. Brodart's invitation, passing the time of their parents' absence with her.

Ever since she had become acquainted with them, Fifine Brodart's heart had yearned over Bellah Pipotin's children. She, too, had had two little daughters, and they had died within a few days of one another when the elder was about the age of little Clarice. The bereaved mother had learned cheerfulness and self control in the hard school of her early childhood, and her warm interest in the things of others had saved her from a brooding sorrow; but her grief had borne lovely fruit in an increased tenderness for all children and a more

vivid sympathy with the happy as well as the sorrowing. The weeks that Bellah's children spent with her were perhaps the happiest she had known since her children died.

It was early in this fortnight that Henriette Caroff, replacing Mrs. Pipotin on the *Bon Berger*, saw Lucie Chardonnet come in just as a meeting was beginning. Henriette was at the harmonium and any word of greeting was impossible, for Mr. Brodart was already giving out his text, "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." As the sermon went on, Henriette was startled by the intensity of the schoolmistress's attention and when the service was over she made her way to her as rapidly as possible.

Henriette explained that she was in Sens for a single night, having come to make arrangements for a school when the vacation should be over. "Mme Languard will hardly want me after that," she said, "for poor Mme de Marcy is failing very rapidly. I could not have left them for a night but that the worthy landlady of the village inn undertook to stay at the Manor house. I shall return early to-morrow."

She made no remark about the service, though her wistful look long dwelt in her friend's memory.

A few days later Father Chardonnet himself came—he was in Sens to call on the Bishop, he said. He was evidently disappointed not to find Mr. Pipotin, yet he was interested in meeting his sister's friend and her husband, and promptly ac-

cepted Mrs. Caroff's invitation to luncheon. His interest was greatly deepened when Caroff told him that he had himself been destined for the priesthood; and when Caroff further added that he had been led to change the whole purpose of his life through teachings heard, not on this boat, but on another belonging to this mission, ten years before, while a student in Brittany, the priest was evidently deeply impressed. He said little; yet when he went away Caroff said to his wife, "I feel as if I had found a friend."

Not long after, Mlle Chardonnet wrote to Mrs. Caroff that Mme de Marcy was dead, that Mme Languard was planning to close the Manor house and go to Paris on business, and that she herself was to have a school in the neighborhood of Sens. "I feel most of all sorry for Antoine," wrote the schoolmistress, "for the interests of the manor house have greatly occupied him and prevented his feeling too deeply the hopelessness of his work here. For however difficult was his task when he came, and found this a village of atheists, he still had hope of one day by prayer and vigil winning them to the faith. But since the visit of the boat that is manifestly impossible. He seems not to care now; his indifference would puzzle me but that I know him to be absorbed in Mme Languard's sorrows; but when we are gone I know not what he will do."

CHAPTER XXXI

It was natural, in view of her old friendship with Henriette Caroff, that Lucie Chardonnet should come now and again to the boat. Her school was less than three miles distant, in the hamlet of Fortuney, and the lack of congenial society there, if nothing else, would have made her willing to take the walk after her day's work was done. Always intensely in earnest, she had not seemed to Henriette Caroff to be particularly attracted by the meetings; it was friendship and not religious interest that brought her, Henriette explained to Bellah Pipotin on the evening of her return. But Bellah, watching the schoolmistress narrowly, became convinced that on that evening at least, her interest in the sermon was very real. The text was, "Go and sin no more," the theme being the willingness of Christ to forgive the sinner.

Bellah was therefore not surprised when, the next morning being the school holiday, Mlle Chardonnet came to the boat, and asked if she might see her alone. Involuntarily her thoughts went back to the first time Mlle Chardonnet had made the same request. It was more than a year since that day at Montargis, when she had come to remonstrate against the presence of the boat near her brother's parish. Since then, though their intercourse had been slight, it had been such as to in-

spire mutual confidence and esteem. Still Mrs. Pipotin was taken by surprise when the self-possessed schoolmistress, with hardly a word of greeting, exclaimed, with intense feeling:

"The forgiveness of sins! Mrs. Pipotin, I beg of you to tell me how I may obtain it. Should I confess to a priest? Why is it that I do not feel as if that would bring me peace?"

Bellah turned to her Bible, and opening at the Thirty-second Psalm, she read how David had received the forgiveness of sins.

"That is good," said Mlle Chardonnet, thoughtfully. Then, with a deep sigh, "Oh, what a relief!" and taking the Bible from Bellah's hand, she re-read the verses.

"But," she exclaimed, suddenly, "what of the keys Christ gave to St. Peter! 'Whosoever sins ye remit shall be remitted.' That is a priest's power, is it not?"

"Read for yourself," said Bellah, turning to the second of Acts. "Here is where St. Peter first used the keys to open the Gospel to the Jews. Their question, 'What must we do?' is yours. And you see that Peter answered, 'Turn to God, change your minds about Jesus, confess him by baptism You shall receive the forgiveness of sins'"

Again the schoolmistress read long and thoughtfully.

"And now," said Bellah, turning to the tenth chapter, "see how Peter used the keys again to

open the Gospel to Cornelius and the Gentiles. But it was not he who forgave their sins; it was Jesus whom he preached to them. Whosoever believes in Jesus receives the remission of sins—from him. Now, while we are talking, you may receive the forgiveness of sins."

Mlle Chardonnet read the passage carefully. Then, as some one came to the door, "I must think, I must think," she said. "And"—she hesitated—"would it be too much to ask Mr. Pipotin to come and explain things to me?"

"He will gladly go," replied Bellah. "When are you at leisure?"

"School closes at four," she replied, and hastened away.

The next afternoon Nicolas walked over through the fields, the lark singing vespers over his head. Mlle Chardonnet met him at the door.

"I have not slept all night," she exclaimed. "I have read the passages over and over. Oh, how I have suffered! What shall I do? What shall I do?"

It was no superficial feeling that could thus move a woman of her proud reserve, and Mr. Pipotin saw that only the deepest truths could meet her need. He opened the Bible and read to her of Jesus who was made sin for us, who died for our sins, who died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

"I see," she said at last, slowly; then, a look of ecstasy lighting up her face, "Oh, I see, I see! I

am comforted, my sins are forgiven *for his sake.*"

They knelt together and poured out their full hearts in praise and thanksgiving. As they rose, Mlle Chardonnet said:

"I wish there were something I could do to show my gratitude to you—and to God. I wonder if it would help—if it would do any good—if I were to tell the people to-night what God has done for me."

"It would do great good," replied the evangelist, "but are you sure you are equal to it?"

"There is only one thing," she replied, speaking slowly and thoughtfully. "It would pain Antoine, and—Mr. Pipotin, is it a sin that I find it hard to do anything, even a duty, that is likely to pain my brother?"

"It is far from a sin to shrink from giving pain," replied Mr. Pipotin, "but I am not sure that this would pain your brother. He was with me this morning. It is no betrayal of confidence for me to tell you that he is very gravely in doubt as to remaining in the priesthood." Lucie uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"He tells me that he had an interview with the bishop on the subject a fortnight since," Mr. Pipotin went on, "but Monsignor Alexandre could not see that his scruples were well founded, and asked him to reconsider. He has done so, but without finding peace, and he went to the bishop again as I set out to come to you."

"Gone to the bishop!" said the sister, slowly

"and about renouncing the priesthood! And so all the labors, all the ambitions, all the hopes of years—" she sat down and buried her face in her hands.

"Is the sacrifice too great?" asked the evangelist, gently.

She did not answer for several moments; then she looked up with a countenance of intense sadness.

"What shall I say? Can you think what it is to lose one's entire past? to have the record of a lifetime turn to ashes before your face? It has been Antoine's life, his one thought since his earliest consciousness, that he should be a priest. What must he have suffered, what must he be suffering, if he can think of giving up the priesthood!"

It was nothing to her that the long struggles of her own life were thus rendered vain; as always, her beloved brother occupied her whole horizon. Nicolas sought to lighten her deep sadness with a happier thought.

"But if he loses his life only to gain it—"

"As I have done," she exclaimed, her face illumined with joy. "Mr. Pipotin, is it so? Has Antoine found Jesus precious, as I have? Is he indeed giving up all for him?"

"I earnestly believe it," the evangelist replied, "but thus far he is not conscious of such a motive. He has become profoundly convinced of the inadequacy of his religion to meet the needs of his people; his inability to offer Mme Languard adequate

comfort, to win the villagers from atheism, is a burning sorrow in his heart. As an honest man, he says, he cannot go on administering the ordinances of a useless faith. That is as far as he has gone as yet. But the next step can hardly fail to be a short one. He will probably come to the boat this evening. I pray that he may there hear what will help him."

Lucie flushed deeply, as she asked, "Do you think my speaking would help—or shock him?"

"It might do either," Nicolas answered thoughtfully. "I can hardly advise. Do not decide the matter hastily. Consider; pray; and act as you may see your way to do."

Father Chardonnet was on the boat that evening, and it was with a peculiar tenderness that he took his sister's hand in his when she came and sat down beside him. He looked wistfully at her for a moment, then said very gently, "Mr. Pipotin has told me, Lucie. Do not fear to do what you may think your duty because of me."

So before the close of the meeting she rose, and in clear and simple language told what God had done for her. As she spoke, her brother buried his face in his hands, but when she sat down he again took her hand and clasped it firmly in both of his.

The audience that evening and for several evenings past was not of the kind usually found on the *Bon Berger*. Sens is not only an Episcopal city, it is also an educational centre, and on their return

from vacation the professors in the Lycée had begun to visit the boat, and many of the parents of the youths who were attending it shortly followed them. It would never have occurred to them to go to the little "temple" where Pastor Brodart preached every Sunday, but on the boat they discovered him to be a most attractive preacher. As to the students, they showed a surprising degree of interest, coming in large numbers though for the most part in boating costume, and in their skiffs, which they moored to the *Bon Berger*, listening through the open windows. It was in the hearing of people of this class that Mlle Chardonnet made her modest profession of faith.

Her brother walked home with her; in silence until they had left the city. When they were at last alone in the fields he again took her hand and said, "It is done, Lucie; you have given up the old faith, and I—I am wearing the cassock for the last time. To-morrow I send in my formal resignation to the bishop, and assume the garb of an ordinary citizen."

She knew him too well to utter a word of lament; not even to her as yet could he say a word of the agonies he must have suffered before coming to this. She only laid her cheek against his shoulder as they walked together, and then he passed his arm around her waist. Side by side, together thus, they had faced the world through all these years.

"And what shall you do next, Antoine?" she asked at last.

"I have been talking with that good fellow, Caroff. It is God's own mercy that sent him here at this time and that kept him here, after the Pipotins' return, when he expected to go away. He understands, for he, too, was once looking forward to the priesthood as the high goal that would well repay all imaginable sacrifices. He and his wife have a little home in Paris now, very tiny, very modest, he tells me, for a colporteur's salary is of the smallest. But that home they offer to share with me, Lucie, until I have thought myself clear, and decided what to do next. It must mean pinching self-denial to them, and yet—I have decided to accept."

"And you have done right, Antoine," the sister answered. "But the self-denial need not be quite so great. You will let me share with you?"

"As you have always done, my Lucie? I will not say no to that, for I know your heart. And there is nothing that I can do to help myself. I am fitted for no sort of work, manual or mental. What is a disfrocked priest good for? The world looks vague and dark before me. But you are in it, and all these good friends, and I am a man, though a disfrocked priest. It shall not be for always, Lucie dear; but until the way opens you shall go on denying yourself for me as you have done all your arduous, loving life."

He kissed her on the brow, and they went on in silence to her door.

On the boat Nicolas was having an interesting

conversation with the celebrated Parisian oculist, Professor Valgrand, who had come to Sens to give a course of lectures on optics in the Lycée. Professor Valgrand had first been drawn to the boat by curiosity, he wondered what was the attraction for the school boys. He had understood, as he told Mr. Pipotin, that the boat work was one "of public instruction and moralization," but he was not accustomed to see college boys so much interested in being "moralized." Whether or not he discovered the attraction for the boys he soon found himself attracted, and after a few attendances he bought a Bible. Now he had remained after the meeting, the Bible in his hand.

"Sir," he said to Nicolas, when after the others had gone they had sat down together, "I have come to ask you to explain to me a little more particularly about your religion. I bought this Bible a few days since, as I observe that you use it constantly. The New Testament, I perceive, is the book of the Catholic religion, being, as I observe, a sketch of the life of Jesus Christ and some of the more notable of the saints. I therefore did not read it, as Catholicism interests me not at all, but at once addressed myself to the Old Testament, as doubtless the sacred book of Protestants, which I understand that you are. I learn from it that your religion inculcates the sacrifice of animals, and as I have seen no indication that you practice this rite here, I am interested to learn at what seasons and under what circumstances these sacrifices are offered."

Nicolas had believed himself to have come in contact with all possible phases of religious ignorance, during his ten years of evangelistic work, but here was a new and most amazing development. That it should exist in the person of a man of the highest scientific attainment was, however, not amazing, since religious ignorance in France is confined to no intellectual class. Patiently he set himself to enlighten the professor's mind, and from this time dated a friendship which grew ever closer until the course of lectures was completed and M. Valgrand returned to Paris.

"I wonder," said Bellah, as she watched his retreating figure on the day when he bade them good-bye, "I wonder if Professor Valgrand could do anything for little Ernestine's eyes."

"Hardly, yet I wish we had thought to speak of the child to him. Still, we know too little of the cause of her blindness to speak intelligently; so perhaps it is just as well that we did not broach the subject."

CHAPTER XXXII

Up, up, up, would the long flights of stone steps never cease? And this great building with its ill-smelling stairways opening now and again upon dark passages, narrow as a well-hole, from which resounded a babel of noises, how was it possible for human beings to live here who all their lives had been accustomed to the open air and the sweet breath of fields and woods and the rippling of quiet rivers?

"At last, here we are," said Jean Poêle, as the janitress turned a key in a lock on the sixth floor and threw open the narrow door. A small room, ill-ventilated through its one window set high in the wall, with two dark closets meant for bed-rooms, this was to be their home.

Thérèse sat down, panting, upon one of the two large bundles which her husband and son had brought upon their backs, and which contained their worldly all. George walked to the window, and by a neatly executed spring planted himself upon the ledge. The prospect was thirty inches wide, and terminated in the splashed and mil-dewed wall, irregularly window-dotted, of another wing of the vast human beehive. The boy let himself down again, thankful for the first time that Ernestine could not see. The dingy cobwebbed ceiling, the broken walls, the floor inch deep with

dirt, the sagging chimney, brought before him with a sharp pang of contrast the blue heavens and the green earth and the all outdoors which had hitherto been his own.

The narrow room reverberated with noises. Not the sweet confused sounds of the country; not even the harsh outdoor noises of the great city; the room was too deeply involved in the intricate ramifications of the enormous tenement house for that. The clatter of heavy-shod feet upon stone steps mingled with shrill voices of objugatory women, deep cursing of inebriate men, unheeded wailings of little children, hollow groans of untended sick. From morning till morning again the Cité Jeanne d'Arc, with its teeming swarm of twenty-five hundred souls, was vocal with the sounds of human wretchedness and sin.

Jean Poêle had not known, when he bargained for accommodation in this largest tenement house in the world, that the sin it sheltered was even more appalling than the wretchedness. No one had told him that, though many reputable people lived here, yet on Saturday nights there was no policeman in all Paris so foolhardy as to venture unsupported within these precincts. He only knew—instructed by a "countryman" who had once spent three days in Paris —that lodgings here were of the very cheapest, and that among the lodgers were many blind persons. These considerations, combined with the fact that he knew not where else to go, had resulted in this selection of a home.

"One might as well get to work, boy," he said, rousing himself from a moody survey of the premises. "Mother is tired, and the little one would be the better of a nap. Let us get out the bed and while they sleep we can perhaps find some water and clean up a bit."

Yes, mother was tired. For weeks past Thérèse had been strangely unlike her old sturdy self. An indescribable languor had seized her, varied often with dull wearing pain, until at last she was unable to do her share of the heavy work. It was this fact quite as much as Mrs. Pipotin's hint about schools for the blind, that had decided Jean to go to Paris for the winter. There were hospitals in Paris; and if Thérèse were to be seriously ill, a hospital would be a haven of refuge.

The room cleaned as far as might be, the question of work was next in order, and as the days went on the question became more and more serious. Neither Jean nor George was fitted by training or habit for the vocations of a city. Happily, however, George soon found work with a vegetable dealer in the great market. It was no hardship for a boy of his training to get up at 3 o'clock and take the hours' walk from the Cité Jeanne d'Arc to the Halles Centrales, and though the wages were very small there were often left-over salads and fruits which fell to his share, and which helped to eke out the frugal fare which, however frugal, made an alarmingly heavy draft upon their slender purse —the savings of Jean's first entirely sober summer.

But fruits and salads could not supply the place of fuel, and the cold weather drew on, and still Jean had not found work.

Long before this, however, another anxiety claimed Thérèse's attention. Ernestine was drooping from unwonted confinement in the ill-ventilated room, and the mother roused herself to take the child out every day for an hour on the sunny Boulevard de la Gare, though every step of the long flights of stairs was a distinct and separate pain.

She was toiling up one day, leading by the hand her little girl, who, already brightened by the sunshine, was prattling merrily while her mother paused on every third step to gather up courage for the next. A door on the landing was opened and a quavering but pleasant voice said:

"Is that the little blind girl? I know her voice already, you see. Will not she and her mother come in and pay blind old Mother Celeste a visit?"

She was indeed very old, Mother Celeste—past eighty, she afterward told Thérèse. Yet her face was full of brightness and peace, and her voice was so cheery that little Ernestine seized her hand as that of a friend, and pulling the old lady toward her, whispered in her ear as she bent over her, "Dr. Jesus will make us both see when we go to his house, won't he?"

"Blessed lamb!" ejaculated the old woman, "of course he will; but you must come to my house now." She led the way into a small, windowless, but wonderfully well ordered room.

"I'll leave the door open, Madame," she said cheerfully, "for you need to see, though I do not, and the rent is cheaper where there is no window. But you'll not mind my going on with my work?" she added, when having installed Thérèse in the only chair, with Ernestine on her knee, she sat down on her narrow little couch and drew toward her the square table which occupied much of the small room. On it were a quantity of old newspapers, a paste pot, large scissors and a pile of paper bags.

"It is not a lucrative industry—paper-bag making," she went on merrily, "and time is time. But how much better than nothing! You see I buy these old newspapers for a cent a pound, and when they are made up into bags they are worth six cents a pound. With diligence I can earn ten cents a day, and with my Old Age pension of ten cents a day I get on none too ill."

Thérèse's heart, like little Ernestine's, warmed to this kindly old woman, so cheerful in her dark loneliness; and it seemed as if her own troubles poured themselves out as in the nature of things.

"What if I should teach you and the little one to make bags?" asked Mother Celeste, when the story was done. "It is not too laborious for you, and it will amuse the little girl; and your man can go for the papers and carry back the bags."

"And yours, too, Mother Celeste? On that condition I gladly accept your offer."

So the bargain was struck, and after a few days

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of practice the paper bag business went on merrily. Thérèse's room became the workshop, and before long both Jean and George gave their hours of leisure to bag-making. Still, it was a poor business for an able bodied man, and Jean spent the larger half of his time looking for work.

One afternoon every week Mother Celeste absented herself, and after a few such occasions she invited Thérèse to go with her to "her meeting," including Ernestine as a matter of course. It was a pretty long walk, along the Rue Nationale, but it brought them at last to a large hall which, by its open timbered roof, by the platform and harmonium at one end, and the pictures on the walls, reminded Thérèse strongly of the *Bon Berger*. Involuntarily she looked for the captain lady, but though there were several pleasant looking women on the platform and at the door, the captain lady was not among them. Evidently Ernestine had the same impression, for with the first hymn—which happened to be one she had heard on the boat—she caught her mother's hand, and whispered, "Mother, is the captain lady here?"

Thérèse whispered to Mother Celeste the question whether there was a boat connected with this meeting. But Mother Celeste only shook her head. She had never heard of any boat, she said.

The audience was entirely composed of women and little children, and the teachings were entirely addressed to the women as mothers and wives. After the service the young woman who had been

playing the harmonium came to Mother Celeste, who greeted her eagerly as Mlle Jeanne, and presented her new friends.

"You are ill, are you not," asked Mlle Jeanne, looking attentively at Thérèse. "Would you not like to come to our dispensary to-morrow at ten? We have a very kind physician, there is nothing to pay, and there is always a little religious service."

Thérèse accepted the invitation. That dull pain had been growing more persistent the past fortnight, and she felt her strength ebbing away. So leaving Ernestine with the kind old blind woman she presented herself next morning at the dispensary

The religious service made no impression upon her; she had never been able to see why her husband and son cared so much about religion. She was simply willing to spend half an hour thus if this was the condition of the doctor's advice. But the consultation with the doctor left her sorely in need of consolation, for with all possible kindness he had told her that she was gravely ill, that an operation would be necessary, and that she ought to go to the hospital as soon as she could possibly make arrangements to do so

Mlle Jeanne realized the severity of the blow, and she walked home with her, but it was in vain that she sought to apply the consolations of religion. To poor Thérèse there was no consolation. How could she leave her little blind child, and her husband and son? How could she endure the horrors of an operation?

Good old Mother Celeste was a more practical comforter than Mlle Jeanne, for she at once offered to take entire charge of Ernestine, and even to "do for" Jean and George. "It is as easy to make bread soup for four as for one," she said, and by this time bread soup—that last resource of the very poor in France, made of stale bread and water, with if possible a bit of lard and an onion—had become the staple diet of the Poêle family.

And so poor Thérèse went to the hospital, and down into that darkness which may be the darkness of death. But her outdoor life and sturdy peasant health stood her in good stead, and serious though the operation was, the day came at last when Mlle Jeanne could bring Mother Celeste and little Ernestine to see her.

She left them alone and went to another bed, beside which a young lady was sitting. But a few minutes later both women crossed the ward, and Henriette Caroff, taking Thérèse's hand, said kindly, "Have I not seen you on the *Bon Berger?* Is not this the little blind girl in whom Mrs. Pipotin is so much interested?"

It was a happy moment for Thérèse, but to little Ernestine it seemed to be an occasion of especial joy. She fondled Henriette's hand as she stood beside her, and when at last Henriette turned from the mother to speak to the child, the little one whispered in her ear, "Do you know Dr. Jesus?"

Henriette had heard the pathetic story of this little girl's untutored faith, and she simply an-

swered, "Yes, dear, I know him. He loves us both."

From that hour things went better with the afflicted family. Mr. and Mrs. Caroff gave them what was far better than material aid, counsel, interest, the benefit of their knowledge. Work was found for Jean in the railroad yards, and little Ernestine, released from her duty of bread winner, was taken every day to that school for the blind to which the child had looked forward with longing. George and his father were directed to the Mission hall in the Rue Nationale, and found to their joy that the Mission, though Mother Celeste had been ignorant of the fact, was indeed connected with the boat. Best of all, Henriette Caroff came almost daily to Thérèse's bedside, and in her simple teachings the sick woman began to awaken to an interest in her own salvation

As Henriette sat beside Thérèse's bed, telling the simple Bible stories which were what she could best understand, other invalids would gather around them. "Why have I never heard that before?" one would ask; "it is all so plain that we can understand it." "Yes," another would say, "they never explain things like that in our church. If they had I should have been a better woman."

"May I come, too?" asked a stranger one day. She was a slight gipsy-looking girl, with a tiny baby in her arms, and her wan face wore an expression of unutterable sadness.

"To be sure," said Henriette kindly. "Are you

just come in?" she looked at the infant, which seemed to be only a few days old.

"I have just been discharged from the maternity ward," the girl answered, "but I have no home to go to, for my husband is in the men's ward across the hall."

"Let me go with you to see him," said Henriette, and bidding the other women good-bye and taking the infant from its mother's weak arms, they went together to the men's ward. It needed the name on the card above the bed for Henriette to recognize Robert Arnaud, so wasted was he, so evidently in the last stages of consumption. But his name recalled clearly the time when she had seen him and his young wife in the hall at Chatillon, early in the preceding spring.

The poor young fellow was touched to the heart at seeing his child in Henriette's arms. "She will never know me," he said, softly touching the little downy head, "but now that you have had her in your arms I can leave her with a quiet heart. I can trust you to be a friend to my poor little wife, can I not?"

"You may indeed," said Henriette, "but she has a better Friend, you know."

"Yes, *I* know," he replied, "but she does not, poor little Fantine, and you will be his angel to her."

When Henriette went home that evening to the apartment of three tiny rooms which she had made so bright a home for her colporteur husband, and

so grateful a shelter for the much perplexed man who had once been Father Chardonnet, it was to ask the latter if he would not be a friend to Robin Arnaud during the remainder of his short life. From that day while the young man lived Antoine Chardonnet was daily at his bedside. Perhaps Henriette had divined that the task of smoothing the dying pillow of one who knew Whom he believed, would encourage the former priest, whose problem had arisen from his own inability to bring comfort to the troubled, and would help him to the solution of his own problem; but whether or not she had foreseen it, this was the result. As Robin's lamp of life burned more and more feebly, Antoine Chardonnet walked beside him in the dark valley with an ever firmer and more assured tread, and the day when the clear light of heaven broke upon his soul was the day when kneeling beside Robin's pillow, the dying man's hand clasped in his, he committed the departing soul to God in a prayer full of exulting confidence, and gently closed the sightless eyes when they had looked their last on earth.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Mr. and Mrs. Brodart had come up from Sens to Paris for the days which included the anniversary of the Mission, doubly important this year in view of plans for extra work in connection with the Exposition, and they joined the sorrowful little group which followed Robert Arnaud to the grave—his gipsy wife with her baby in her arms, Antoine Chardonnet and the Caroffs. Turning away from the grave, Fifine's quick eye noticed the extreme exhaustion of the young widow, and asking her husband to go forward and call a cab, she took the baby in her arms and walked beside the mother to the cemetery gates. It was the first time she had had a baby in her arms since her own children died, and with a rush of unutterable tenderness she clasped the poor little waif closely to her bosom.

"What are you going to do with baby and yourself?" she asked when they were seated in the carriage.

Fantine shook her head. "I do not know. *He* asked me not to put it with the Sisters, and I am not strong enough to care for it and work," she said dispiritedly. Then added after a moment's pause, "He said to me, 'Bring her up to love Jesus,' but how can I?—I hate this big city," she broke out, her languid indifference giving way to passion. "I want to go back to my people. They

would be good to me—they would take care of me. Only *she*"—touching the baby's little head, "could never learn about Jesus there. My people dont know him. And I promised Robin."

"Would you give up your baby if you were sure she would be taught about Jesus?" asked Fifine after some reflection.

Fantine also reflected. "My people would be good to her," she said, "but Robin would not like her to grow up our way, and I could never sleep quiet if he was displeased with me. I think he would rather I gave her up than that."

The carriage stopped at the poor lodging where Fantine and the baby had found shelter. "We will think about it," said Fifine hurriedly. "I am glad you want to meet your husband's wishes." She held the baby close; already it had found its way to her inmost heart.

When, two or three days later, Mrs. Brodart's friends learned that she had bought a baby, actually paying its mother thirty francs as the only way of making her understand that her baby was now legally the property of another, there were many gentle remonstrances. "A gipsy mother—a consumptive father, bad blood, physical and moral," they said. "What can you hope to make of her?" But Fifine only clasped the baby tighter in her arms—those arms that had ached so sorely for the weight of a little child—and said, softly,

"She was God's child before she was theirs. He has said to me, 'Take this child and nurse it *for*

me;' and he will give me the only wages that are worth asking for—her immortal soul.'' And whatever others might think, Bellah Pipotin, who with her husband and children had also come to Paris to join in celebrating the anniversary of the Mission, felt sure that her friend had done right.

With Mr. and Mrs. Brodart had come to Paris Mlle Chardonnet, whose career as schoolmistress had come to an abrupt end. After her conversion she had introduced the Bible into her school as a reading book for the older pupils, and this act shortly coming to the ears of the bishop, she had been warned to discontinue the practice. But the schoolmistress had urged that there was no law in France against the use of the Bible in the national schools; and this was true, such a possibility never having occurred to the legislators of the French Republic.

There was, however, no law to prevent the transfer of Mlle Chardonnet to a smaller school in a more obscure village, and this the bishop had influence enough to bring to pass. And as this had been done at Christmas, without the result of inducing Mlle Chardonnet to give up the use of the Bible, she had been transferred at Easter to a still more insignificant school, where the stipend was insufficient for the support of one who had no home. And so she had come up to Paris to consult her brother, to whose support she could no longer contribute.

There is indeed in the hands of certain Protes-

tants in Paris a small fund contributed for the temporary aid of those priests who now, in constantly increasing numbers, are leaving the Church of Rome. But to receive so manifest a charity would have gone contrary to all the habits and principles of this brother and sister. And yet it was impossible that Antoine should remain long a charge upon the meagre income of his brother and sister friends, the Caroffs. He had thought himself clear at last, had come out into the light. What should be the next step?

The brother and sister were thoughtfully considering this point, sitting together in the small study which Caroff shared with Antoine by day, and in which a pallet was spread for the ex-priest at night. Lucie came to the door, her face radiant, "There is a friend to see you," she said.

It was Mme Languard. They had not seen her for many months, for after a few weeks in Paris in the autumn she had gone back to the lonely manor-house. Now she came toward them, her old unaffected self, yet with a gladness in her eyes that they had never seen there.

"Dear children," she said, giving each a hand, "I have lately learned that I am a rich woman. There was property in litigation, and now it is settled, and it appears to be very valuable. And I have no one but you two, to whom I owe all the consolation of those dark weeks. Will you not be son and daughter to me? Will you not thus make it possible for me to enjoy what else would be no joy?"

And so it was settled that for at least so much as would enable him to take the university course necessary to fit him for the pastorate, Antoine would share her wealth as frankly as if he had been her son. And Lucie thankfully recognized her duty to be to this lonely woman as a daughter.

"You will lead me to the light, Lucie," said Mme Languard as the conference broke up. "I am still groping in darkness, but with your strong hand I may hope to reach that light which—perhaps—I see afar."

Before this time Thérèse had gone back to her family, recovered in a spiritual as well as in a physical sense. In the hospital she had at last come, under Mrs. Caroff's teachings, to a sense of sin, and then to an apprehension of what Christ had done for her. "Since you taught me, Madame," she said to Henriette, "I am different, quite different. I feel as if a load were gone from me. I am lighter, much lighter and happier. I do not think I can be saved by any outward thing, but just by Jesus, who let himself be crucified for our sin. And I feel like a different person. Instead of grumbling because my husband was so long out of work, I pray to the Lord, and I try to remember what I have read and sung. It is sad not to be able to read for oneself, but George reads to us, and he reads all the tracts I get at the Mothers' Meeting. Last evening he read us such a touching story that it made us cry, all three."

The anniversary was celebrated in another hall

than that of the Rue Nationale, which had become a second home to Jean and George Poêle, and to Thérèse also since she came out of the hospital, but they all found their way to the celebration. It was in the mission station of the Rue Rivoli, the celebrated dance hall of a century ago, the hall where Louise Michel had made her most lurid anarchistic speeches, yet where in the past sixteen years hundreds have found the way of life. There, in the group gathered around the sweet-faced, silver-voiced woman who no less than her now sainted husband was the founder of this remarkable Mission, George saw the captain lady who was the lode star of his life. She saw him, too, and smiled, and later, when the more formal exercises were over, she came to the corner where her old friends were waiting for her.

"How little Ernestine is grown!" she exclaimed. "And are you all well—you Thérèse, you Jean' you George?"

They told her of their welfare, and how happy Ernestine was now that she could "almost read" with those intelligent little fingers that made baskets and paper bags and were learning to use knitting needles. But Ernestine put her arm around the captain lady's neck and whispered in her ear, "Will Dr. Jesus let me go where he lives when I have learned all the lessons in that school?"

"Yes, dear child," Bellah whispered gently, "when you have learned all the lessons in this school," and a pang shot through her heart at the

brave self-control of this little child, the long desire for sight hidden away so carefully in her heart lest it should grieve those who loved her.

"Is this a little blind girl, Mrs. Pipotin?" asked a voice at her side, and she looked up to see Professor Valgrand.

"You here, Professor," she exclaimed. "We hardly could have hoped for such an evidence of interest as this."

"I have been here many times since my return to Paris," he replied, gravely. "My interest in the work grows deeper every day. But this little child, may I look at her eyes a moment?"

He examined them carefully, asked many questions of the mother as to the malady which had brought on the blindness, and finally made an appointment with Thérèse to bring Ernestine to his clinic. As he went away, the child, who had been entirely silent, but whose cheeks had flushed with an ever-deepening color, exclaimed, in an awed whisper,

"Was that Dr. Jesus? Has he come?"

"No, dear child," said Bellah, tenderly, "not Dr. Jesus, but a friend of his who loves little children." The dread of exciting groundless hope was strong upon her, and she was glad to let George lead the little girl away while she impressed upon the parents the necessity of prudence and self-control, of saying no word which could arouse a hope in the child's mind.

But little Ernestine went home radiant "It was Dr. Jesus, I know," she confided to George. "I could tell by the way his fingers touched my eyes. He is going to make me see."

And when, a few days later, they told her to be a brave little girl and let the doctor do what he thought best, she yielded herself into his hands with a smile, saying, "It *is* Dr. Jesus, isn't it?" They had not the heart to contradict her, and she passed into unconsciousness with the smile still upon her lips. And after days of patient waiting, waiting all the more patient because of the child's firm conviction that it was Dr. Jesus who so tenderly handled her, when at last the bandage was raised and parents, brother, physician waited with bated breath for the result, the great oculist's eyes overflowed with blissful tears as the little child reaching out both hands to him, exclaimed, "Dear Dr. Jesus, I did wait till you were ready, and now you have made me see!"

THE END

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